

THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES  
IN A HIGH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the School of Education  
Drake University

In partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

By Esther Streed Roth  
November 1998

1998

. R742

ACJ 2204

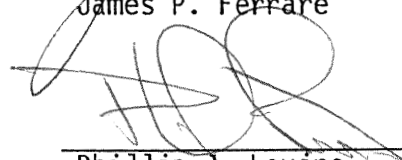
THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES  
IN A HIGH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

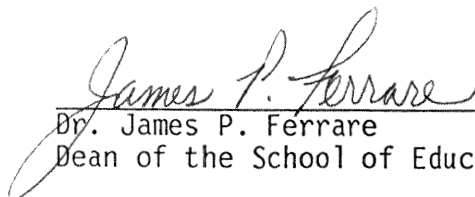
by Esther Streed Roth  
November 1998

Approved by Committee:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Marion V. Panyan

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
James P. Ferrare

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Phillip J. Levine

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. James P. Ferrare  
Dean of the School of Education

# THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES IN A HIGH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

An abstract of a Dissertation by  
Esther Streed Roth  
November 1998  
Drake University  
Advisor: Marion V. Panyan

The Problem. The purpose of this study was to investigate the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities in a high school environment primarily from the teachers' perspectives. Specifically two questions are addressed: (a) What are the characteristics present and to what degree in a high school inclusionary environment? (b) What are the roles of the special education and general education teachers in an inclusionary environment?

Procedures. Two freshman students are included in numerous courses and activities at Newberg High School. Environmental characteristics and teachers' roles surrounding them provided the natural setting for this single case, descriptive, ethnographic research. Data collection through a qualitative design consisted of an initial site visit, a series of initial interviews, formal observations, document analysis, journaling, and follow-up interviews.

Findings. The analysis of data indicated the presence of visionary leadership, collaboration, and physical accommodations. Curricular modifications were primarily the responsibility of the special education teacher. The staff was enthusiastic, desired to do more, and shared mutual respect and admiration for one another. They valued highly the role of peer acceptance for students who are included and recognized inclusion as an evolving process. Parent support was strong and resources were targeted towards inclusionary activities. Teachers identified their roles as facilitators, mostly for modeling social skills, or as providers of direct instruction.

Conclusions, and recommendations. The study concurs with previous research in elementary schools that found visionary leadership and collaboration as the two outstanding characteristics of a meaningful educational environment. Other characteristics such as supports for staff and students, funding, effective parent involvement, and accessibility were also evidenced. Transition planning and refocused use of assessment did not evolve as themes with this investigative approach. Teachers' roles are in a state of change. The study offers suggestions specific to Newberg High School based upon its strengths and beliefs.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1.	INTRODUCTION	
	Definition of Terms .....	1
	The Need to Include Students with Special Learning Needs in the High School .....	4
	Historical Foundation for Inclusion .....	6
	Iowa's Educational Priorities and Directions .....	9
	Issues Specific to the High School Setting .....	11
	Rationale for the Study .....	13
	Research Questions .....	15
	Limitations .....	17
2.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	19
	Introduction .....	19
	Inclusion as a Part of Education .....	20
	Common Characteristics .....	23
	Visionary Leadership .....	24
	Refocused Use of Assessment .....	25
	Supports for Staff and Students .....	27
	Funding .....	30
	Effective Parent Involvement .....	31
	Classroom Models and Effective Teaching Practices ...	32
	Systemic Transition Planning Process .....	34



	Page
Building and Opportunities Accessible to All .....	36
Collaboration .....	26
Summary .....	41
3. METHODS AND PROCEDURES .....	42
Overview .....	42
Approach .....	43
Selection of Site .....	44
Protection of the Rights of the Participants .....	46
Naturalistic Inquiry .....	47
Fieldwork .....	48
Data Analysis .....	51
4. FINDINGS .....	53
Overview .....	53
Background Information .....	54
Characteristics .....	61
Teachers' Roles .....	77
5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .....	84
Summary .....	84
Limitations .....	88
Conclusions and Implications .....	89
Teachers' Roles .....	98
Other Conclusions and Implications .....	100
Recommendations for the Site .....	102
Directions for Future Studies .....	106

	Page
REFERENCES .....	111
APPENDIXES	
A. Letter of Inquiry to High School Principals .....	116
Definition of Inclusion Provided to Principals .....	117
List of Principals .....	118
B. Copy of Participant Agreement .....	122
C. Observation Data Sheets .....	124

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this ethnographic case study is to describe the characteristics present in a high school inclusionary environment especially as they relate to the roles of the teachers. In this chapter the terms inclusion and cognitive disabilities are defined, the need for inclusion in high schools explained, the historical foundation for inclusion tracked, Iowa's educational priorities and directions reviewed, and several issues specific to the high school setting addressed. The conclusion provides a rationale for the study, clarifies my problem, and identifies known limitations.

#### Definition of Terms

##### Inclusion

Implementation techniques may seem elusive in part because of inconsistent interpretation of the term inclusion. Inclusion is a process, not a tool nor a product.

"Inclusion refers to the opportunity for all students to participate in the totality of the school experience. In an inclusive school system, special education and related support services are provided in typical school settings. This includes instruction in regular education classes and participation in extracurricular activities" (Association for Retarded Citizens [Arc], 1992, pp. 2-3). It reflects an approach to education that identifies the general education

classroom as the first alternative for all children. It is a very individualized approach to meeting the educational needs of students with learning problems that effects the larger student community. Ferguson (1995) describes inclusion as a process that is part of total education not exclusively special education. She shares her own definition of inclusion:

Inclusion is a process of meshing general and special education reform initiatives and strategies in order to achieve a unified system of public education that incorporates all children and youths as active, fully participating members of the school community; that views diversity as the norm; and that ensures a high-quality education for each student by providing meaningful curriculum, effective teaching, and necessary supports for each student. (p. 286)

Some common, but not exclusive characteristics of inclusion include:

Active participation in general education classrooms and activities for both educational and social opportunities (Students with disabilities are dispersed throughout the system following same schedule as peers)

Individualized educational program (IEP)

Support services brought to the student (Services for students with special needs no longer identified by specially labeled rooms or places)

Attendance centers parallel their neighborhood peers (Shared physical space with equal accessibility)

Special education teacher works as team member serving students with and without disabilities together

Using innovative and proven teaching strategies, programs, methods, and materials for a variety of learning styles

### Cognitive Disability

An understanding of the legal definition for mental retardation is essential in defining cognitive disability as used in this study.

*Mental retardation* refers to substantial limitations in present functioning. It is characterized by significantly subaverage intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure, and work. Mental retardation manifests before age 18. (American Association on Mental Retardation, 1992, p. 1)

The term mental retardation is generally appropriate to define the target population and in fact is the legal label attached to the students at the center of this study. Education in Iowa has adopted the term mental disabilities when labeling students with mental retardation who are in need of special services. This term becomes ambiguous, however, as adult services consider both mental illness and mental retardation as components of mental disabilities. The focus of this study is an educational environment with a strong emphasis on knowledge acquisition and application (the high school). Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1983) defines cognition as, "the act or process of knowing including both awareness and judgment" (p. 257). Because of the lack of confusion, negative connotations, and its definitional fit with the high school setting, cognitive disability is used in this research. It focuses on the environment and limits perseveration on issues surrounding mental retardation. Thus cognitive disabilities will be used exclusively throughout this study in reference to those students who are indexed as students in need of special services because of severe mental disabilities.

## The Need to Include Students with Special Learning Needs In the High School

Society currently recognizes the right of all students to participate fully in public education (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 1997). Transforming such a philosophy into policy and then into practice is the challenge confronting teachers today.

Congressional action emphasized the desire for full participation of students with disabilities into the general curriculum with the passage of the reauthorization of special education legislation called the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997). The expectation that students will participate to the fullest extent possible in the general curriculum is clearly and repeatedly stated throughout IDEA. While the official manifestation of this philosophy awaits the rules process, in some regards it is an act created after the fact. Countless schools and communities are actively striving to include students with disabilities in the general education curriculum, at least in elementary schools. Such activity at the high school or secondary level is more rare and is the focus of this study.

Curricular issues vary between secondary and elementary educational settings. Therefore the right of full participation demands creative approaches and perhaps educational changes for high schools. The content driven curriculum and teacher preparation of high school teachers pose unique challenges to be addressed. Experts argue for inclusion of preschool and elementary students citing cases of justification resting on the need for social skills development alone. The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion [NCERI]

Spring 1997 "Bulletin" presents a succinct rationale, quality indicators, and an overview of contemporary research documenting the benefits of inclusive early childhood and preschool programs for children with and without disabilities (Bruder, 1997). At the same time, experts recognize the questionable socialization validation for high school students with cognitive educational deficits.

Previous research supportive of inclusion has focused on preschool, elementary, and middle school educational levels (Ferguson, 1995; Rogers, 1993). A study conducted by NCERI (1998) investigated 267 districts in 47 states. They found:

The number of school districts reporting inclusive education programs has increased significantly since 1994

Outcomes for students in inclusive education programs, both general and special education are positive

Teachers participating in inclusive education programs report positive professional outcomes for themselves

Students with a wider range of disabilities are in inclusive education programs

School restructuring efforts are having an impact on inclusive education programs, and vice-versa. (p. 3)

Research has yielded several characteristics common to successful implementation of inclusive education (Burnette, 1996; Cole & McLeskey, 1997; King-Sears, 1997; Rogers, 1993; Thousand & Villa, 1995). These factors are: visionary leadership, collaboration, refocused use of assessment, supports for staff and students, funding, parent involvement, classroom models and effective teaching practices, systemic transition planning process, and building and opportunities accessible to all. It is important to note that these outcomes resulted from

research conducted in preschools and elementary and middle schools. The impact of these characteristics at the secondary level is unknown.

Students arrive at high school with the expectation of inclusion. Family members and advocates seek continued positive interactions for the person with disabilities and his or her peers. What happened almost naturally at the earlier educational levels becomes increasingly difficult as educators find themselves caught between two strong, simultaneous, and seemingly dichotomous initiatives. On the one hand is the call for accountability as measured with traditional standardized tests. On the other hand is the quest to make education meaningful and relevant for all students, not exclusively for academic achievers.

#### Historical Foundation for Inclusion

Special education in the United States began with the first school in 1817. Since that time, the methods proposed for providing schooling for students who fall toward one end of the traditional bell curve have been perpetually prone to scrutiny and divergent thinking. Educators developed practices to diagnose and treat these students, but with unmeasured results. Research questioned the need for segregated teaching of students with mild disabilities (Dunn, 1968). The landmark special education legislation, Public Law 94:142 (PL 94:142) in 1975 called for the "least restrictive environment." The numbers of students in special education programs and related professions began to skyrocket. Iowa is not atypical in its growth pattern. In the 1975-76 school year, 5.40% of the students enrolled in public education were identified or eligible for special education services. Twenty years



later the Iowa Department of Education reported that 11.0% of the student population is indexed as in need of special services.

In evaluating special education 10 years after PL 94:142, Will (1986) acknowledged the educational contributions of segregated special education programs and clearly identified their limitations. "Although well-intended, this so-called 'pull-out' approach to the educational difficulties of students with learning problems has failed in many instances to meet the educational needs of these students and has created, however unwittingly, barriers to their successful education" (p. 412). Will created the Regular Education Initiative (REI). "This means special programs and regular education programs must be allowed to collectively contribute skills and resources to carry out individualized education plans based on individualized education needs" (p. 413).

Over a decade ago, leading special educators advocating for inclusion (then called "mainstreaming") were exploring approaches used by general educators that facilitated accommodations for individual differences in the classroom. They sought to discover not whether inclusion was the issue, but rather, "How can we make it work?" (Stainback, Stainback, Courtnege, & Jaben, 1985, p. 144).

President Clinton signed the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) on June 4, 1997. Part A, Section 601c (1) of this significant legislation states:

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. (p. 268)

The act further states:

Over 20 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be more effective by-

(A) having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible;

(B) strengthening the role of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home;

(C) coordinating this Act with other local, educational service agency, State, and Federal school improvement efforts in order to ensure that such children benefit from such efforts and that special education can become a service for such children rather than a place where they are sent;

(D) providing appropriate special education and related services and aids and supports in the regular classroom to such children, whenever appropriate. (p. 264)

Iowa is no exception as states scurry to meet compliance for an act which legally became effective this school year. This is prior to the promulgation of rules and regulations by the federal government which guides the states as they establish their own rules, regulations, and procedures. Both because of the immediate implementation requirements of some sections and also in an attempt to keep their priorities in the forefront, advocacy groups and professional organizations such as the American Association on Mental Retardation (1997), Iowa Protection and Advocacy (1997), and the Council for Exceptional Children (1997) have published their perceptions of IDEA's key issues. The national Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has established a homepage on the internet which contains the law and one that as of today is under construction to provide interpretation. It will be some months before details of the finer points are ironed out. In the meantime, and of relevance to this study is the belief that

important components of IDEA improve integration or inclusion and accountability.

According to Tom Flynn with Creative Employment Options (personal communication, January 8, 1998) there continues to be a steady increase in Iowa in the employment of adults with disabilities in the community. Services are rapidly becoming more available to persons with disabilities in their natural environment rather than individuals needing to relocate in state institutions or large congregate environments. Education is the primary purveyor of needed services from birth to age 21. As such, the role of preparing the students of today for the dynamic society of tomorrow emphasizes the need for educational environments which afford maximum diversity. Inclusion of persons with disabilities is one piece of that diverse population. Its history reflects an evolving, complex practice with long-term implications.

Furthermore, as more students with disabilities reside at home and attend neighborhood schools, allocation of special education resources which follow the student are being examined. When used properly in support of a student in an inclusive educational environment, those resources have been shown to benefit all members of the class, not just the individual with the label. "In an inclusive school, resources are more efficiently used and reach the maximum number of students" (Rogers, 1993, p. 3).

#### Iowa's Educational Priorities and Directions

In Iowa, legislative action and gubernatorial endorsement target the increased accessibility and use of technology as a major educational

priority. Yet the implication for inclusive environments remains unexplored. The school-to-work initiative appears to share the priority lead as statewide schools clarify their intent and restructuring efforts. Special educators are no strangers to the concept of preparing students for the world of work. Curriculum in the special education environment has centered on preparing young people to become productive, contributing adults. Prevocational training in upper elementary and middle schools is the norm. Work sites in the classroom emulate community job situations. Job skills, exploration, and employability are the focus of secondary special education self-contained classrooms. In these settings, the typical high school curriculum is adapted to individual students and small groups in direct response to its meaningfulness and usefulness in the world of work. High school work-study coordinators, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and programs such as the federally funded Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) provide intensified job skills training.

Students' Individual Education Programs (IEPs) must have a transition component which clearly delineates what services are to be provided, who will be providing them, how and when these services will transpire. The value of smoothing the transition from school to work was clearly reiterated in IDEA (1997) as the age of initial planning was moved from age 16 to age 14.

Iowa responded to Assistant Secretary for Special Education Madeline Will's 1986 call for the Regular Education Initiative (REI) by funding collaborative efforts at educating all students in their local communities. The state Department of Education provides training on

collaboration to the regional educational service agencies called Area Education Agencies (AEAs) which are then available to local schools requesting such assistance. State funded conferences encourage the participation of teams from local schools. These teams commonly consist of special educators, general educators, and parents (i.e., Iowa Behavior Initiative and Parent Educator Connection).

Iowa is investigating changes in teacher licensure and thus teacher preparation. Some initiatives such as the unified early childhood endorsement and a mild multi-categorical endorsement have become practice. Others are being discussed through task force activities overseen by the Bureau of Educational Examiners (Roth, 1997a).

During the 1996-97 school year the Bureau of Special Education began to explore ways to help improve learning for students with cognitive educational challenges. The work group's consensus centered around the changing roles of all teachers, especially the teacher of students with special needs, as Iowa continues to include students with special needs into the general classroom (Roth, 1997b).

#### Issues Specific to a High School Setting

There is a gap which exists between the social interaction opportunities presented in preschools and elementary environments and those in high schools. The social capacities developed in high school are refinements and extensions of skills learned and practiced when the students were younger. Veteran high school teachers have many opportunities to watch these young people realign themselves. Previous

friends part, each moving towards other peers with stronger common interests. Friends are no longer friends simply because they live near one another, ride the same bus, attend the same church, or have parents who are friends. Somehow in the wonder of self-discovery the circle of friendly acquaintances broaden for the teenager, and the meaning of friendship changes. What happens to our students with limited cognition in this environment? Where is the justification for inclusion on the basis of social skills development?

The well intended heavy vocational emphasis found in self-contained special education programs (as discussed earlier) steers away from inclusion. Transition is a priority. Parents and professionals alike express concern about losing this valued training for students with learning difficulties. It provides an arguable case for those who approach inclusive education cautiously (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994-1995; Smelter, Rasch, & Yudewitz, 1994).

The involvement of non-education agencies in the planning and provision of services at the secondary level intensifies, or in some instances is initiated. As students prepare for the transition from the formal educational setting into adult segments of the community several groups may need to be involved. Social service agencies, vocational rehabilitation staff, correctional facilities, work activity centers, and community colleges, are examples of some groups invited to be part of the collaborative educational effort.

The most obvious difference among grade levels is in the distinctive educational approaches used. Elementary students readily identify one person as their main teacher with a strong sense of

belonging to a bounded, familiar group of peers. In middle school this one main teacher is replaced by an expanding cadre of teachers, yet an identifiable group of peers remains. In high school, each course presents a unique teacher and a different, fluid combination of fellow students. The dynamics of expanded numbers of peers and teachers with its seemingly infinite number of relationships and social interaction possibilities invokes an important consideration for the inclusion of students with learning needs. What was once an identifiable learning environment in elementary school becomes a series of seemingly disconnected habitats in high school.

#### Rationale for the Study

Recent discussions with classroom special education teachers conclude that inclusive education programs at the high school level in Iowa are rare, or perchance there is a sense of insecurity about what is being done. This is perhaps illustrated by the nominal response received when letters of inquiry were sent to 59 high school principals regarding an interest in studying an inclusionary high school environment (see Appendix A). Two principals responded. Most high schools appear to be following the previous mainstreaming paradigm which finds the students with special needs leaving a self-contained environment to enter an occasional class or classes with other general education students. Also the blending of previously separated self-contained programs with one another is becoming common. Special educators still teach special education students but with differing combinations throughout the school day. According to S. Hawthorne, Special Education Finance Consultant,

Bureau of Special Education, Iowa Department of Education, districts are serving more of their own students within their natural districts. Comparative information on students who are tuitioned-out of their home school districts finds the total for 1995-96 to be 11,214; for 1996-97, 10,707 (personal communication, December 16, 1997).

There is no clear understanding of how inclusion manifests itself for the high school student with learning problems so that it is a meaningful experience for students with and without special learning challenges. The uniformity of approaches practiced for younger students do not readily lend themselves to high school environments. Each situation is unique and "each secondary program should be tailored to the specific needs of a given setting" (Cole & McLeskey, 1997, p. 3).

High school is seen as the last chance to prepare young people for adulthood. As such the importance of curricular implications and decision making for inclusion at this level are intensified. Determining what the student needs to know and is able to do coupled with the best method of imparting that knowledge or skill presents a formidable challenge.

Practical guidance for teachers desiring to improve education for all students with increasing complexity in the classroom is another important factor. The expectations for teaching and from teachers have changed. Curricular issues are more often multi-dimensional than not.

A clear definition of the changing role of the special educator is missing. The autonomy of the self-contained classroom had historically allowed the special education teacher extensive flexibility regarding curriculum design and adaptation to meet the needs of the



individual or small groups of students. New relationships must be established with students and peers. Responsibilities must be redefined.

The constructivistic approach to education offers the opportunity for new ideas. It challenges traditional methods of instruction and holds the possibility of promise for all students, including those with special learning needs. However it, too, is relatively new among content area trained high school teachers. Much can be learned by investigating the infusion of constructivistic strategies and practices in a high school restructuring for the next century, especially as it relates to the inclusion of students with special learning needs.

Likewise, dynamic and meaningful educational practices and methods such as cooperative learning, alternative assessment, and learning strategies are having an impact on education for all students. Are these being practiced in settings where students with special needs are included?

The recognition of diverse approaches to learning and meaningfulness (e.g., multiple intelligences, emotional intelligence, learning styles) is just entering the high school arena as well. What role do these play in inclusion?

Technology is increasing students' and teachers' capacity to communicate and learn. Will this be a component of a successful inclusive environment?

#### Research Questions

It is important to clearly identify the following premises upon which this study rests.

1. All children can learn. No longer are we bound by the previous misconceptions implied with the use of labels such as teachable and trainable. The more we learn about child development and brain based learning, the more responsibility teachers must take in discovering how to best help each child learn.

2. Education is the right of all children. Real education where teaching and learning intertwine to create meaningful experiences for all of the participants should be afforded all children. Isolation of children who are academically or behaviorally challenged is no longer acceptable and is increasingly perceived as a denial of their basic right to an education.

3. As teachers have individualized instruction, they have discovered that while there are common approaches, there is no one proven method or practice that is uniquely effective in helping all children learn all things. Each students' strengths, needs, experiences, and perceptions must be considered.

4. Change is a part of life. Meaningful change takes time (Hall & Hord, 1987). Ideas discussed or even laws passed today will take time to implement, and in reality, evolve over time.

Given that

the newly defined role of the special education teacher is evolving,

each secondary plan for inclusion is individualized to the student and the school,

and

common characteristics for successful inclusion at the elementary level have been identified,

Therefore, the research questions to be investigated are:

From the perspectives of the team members:

What are the characteristics present and to what degree in a high school inclusionary environment?

What are the roles of the special education and general education teachers in an inclusionary environment?

To address these questions a high school program providing inclusionary opportunities to students with cognitive disabilities will be selected. Data will be collected to identify and analyze which characteristics are in place, and to identify the role of the special education and general education teachers as they relate to one another, the student, and administrators.

#### Limitations

This study will focus on an inclusionary experience at the secondary level. It is limited as the nature of individualized instruction to meet the needs of students with learning problems is necessarily unique to each situation. The definition of success for each particular student may have some characteristics, common to other students. However, when defined from the student's unique perspective the meaning of success will be necessarily singular.

The data for this study were generated from a single school environment. The focus of this study is from the perspective of the teachers in that environment. Other members of the staffing team will

provide insights and add to the breadth of data specifically related to the characteristics present in the educational environment. To involve students beyond the two with cognitive disabilities would add a further dimension, and while valuable, would best be addressed in another study.

The very nature of this single case, descriptive, ethnographic study presents limitations, such as statistical generalizability, acknowledged as inherent in a qualitative approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). Moreover, the purpose of this study is not to test a hypothesis, but rather to discover through purposeful qualitative research, what characteristics and roles are present in a high school inclusionary setting. Merriam (1988) states, "The qualitative case study has been widely used in the service of constructing theory when there is none available to explain a particular phenomenon or when existing theory does not provide an adequate or appropriate explanation" (p. 59). Thus the nature and purpose of this study lessen the implications of such limitations. Furthermore, the proposed methods, as presented in Chapter 3, address this researcher's attempt to conduct a sound, ethical study.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

A review of the literature on the inclusion of students with special needs into the general education classroom is a walk through the history of special education which arrives at an understanding of some of the commonly accepted characteristics of an inclusive educational environment. Chapter 1 of this paper presented an historical overview for inclusion which delineated many of the steps on this walk. It is important to understand that the term inclusion was not used until the 1990s. It evolved from the Regular Education Initiative (REI) of the mid-1980s created by then Secretary of Education, Madeline Will, to more collectively involve students in special programs and regular education (Will, 1986). Its predecessor was "mainstreaming," a term used to describe the practice of admitting students from self-contained special education programs into select regular education environments. These environments ranged from such common spaces as school buildings and grounds, to lunch rooms, to infrequent course participation, most often in non-academic arenas such as physical education, art, and music. In defining the term mainstreaming, Rogers (1993) wrote:

This term has generally been used to refer to the selective placement of special education students in one or more "regular" education classes. Mainstreaming proponents generally assume that a student must "earn" his or her opportunity to be mainstreamed through the ability to "keep up" with the work assigned by the teacher to the other students in the class. This concept is

closely linked to traditional forms of special education service delivery. (p. 1)

Professionals' use of the term inclusion signaled programmatic changes based on a different philosophical approach to educating students with academic learning difficulties. Rather than searching for a students' liabilities or disabilities, the focus is on capability. The belief that all children can learn manifests itself in the practice of placing the student with disabilities in the regular classroom as the first option. Special education is a service or support rather than a place. Inclusion is a process to facilitate that perception.

#### Inclusion as a Part of Education

To move beyond the philosophical arguments supporting inclusion as a process, the characteristics which are present in an inclusionary environment need to be identified. As the focus of this study is the high school, the unique characteristics of that culture must be considered. One important element within that setting is the role of the teacher. Inclusion requires the involvement of special education and general education teachers in planning and implementing an individualized educational program (IDEA, 1997). The roles of the special education and general education teachers in this process need to be investigated. Each member will have a perception worthy of exploration.

Leaders in the field have already moved beyond a time of justification for inclusion to the current quest for successful methods of implementation (Stainback et al., 1985). For example, York and Reynolds (1996) reviewed the literature primarily since 1987 which

focused on "implications for both general and special education teachers" (p. 823). They found that the emerging themes relate to either declarative knowledge (what teachers should know) or procedural knowledge (how teachers should be taught). In identifying the essential knowledge and skills that educators should know, the authors addressed three distinctly separate categories; special educators, general educators, and educators, regardless of role. The emphasis of their chapter is the area of teacher preparation. It is insightful as it initially follows the more traditional dichotomy of special education and general education, but then holds some promise towards an inclusive approach as it discusses at greater length the knowledge universally needed by all educators. The authors relate research that seems caught in a chasm between unique identifiers and blurred identities. However, they offer this conclusion:

For educators in general, the literature focus is toward expansion of the knowledge base of effective teaching and learning by examining contextual circumstances and individual variations. This literature does not focus on distinctions between the professional roles of general and special educators. Instead, the focus is on conditions that promote learning, and the result is support for the view that there is a common knowledge base for educators, regardless of "general" or "special" professional role. (p. 826)

It would be erroneous to view inclusion in isolation from education. The changes in special education are congruent with the systemic changes manifesting themselves in education in general. However, students in need of special education are by definition and functioning ability unique to the general population. The onus of responsibility for creating meaningful learning experiences is relegated to a team which minimally includes:

The parents of a child with a disability; at least one regular education teacher of such child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment); at least one special education teacher, or where appropriate, at least one special education provider of such child; a representative of the local education agency who . . . is knowledgeable about the general curriculum . . . an individual who can interpret the instructional implication of evaluation results . . . and whenever appropriate, the child with a disability. (IDEA, 1997, 614d.1.B)

This team is led by the special education teacher. It is his or her responsibility to address the ominous task of creating a balance between equity and excellence. Equity addresses the right of students with disabilities to be involved in educational environments and opportunities like their peers. The purposes section of IDEA 97 clearly states, "Over 20 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible" (601.5.A). Excellence addresses the coexisting right to a meaningful experience through education which is tailored to meet the unique needs of the individual student. The team must maintain their focus on the individual student as they glean elements common to these seemingly dichotomous paradigms. What are the characteristics of such a learning environment and what are the roles of each teacher in establishing and maintaining this often rather precarious balance?

For the purposes of this study the role of the special educator will be viewed as an academic specialist, that is as an educator with expertise in teaching students with disabilities. Just as inclusion perceives the student as a peer first, special education will be perceived as a part of education first, not as an entity that is



parallel to it. This perspective runs counter to school improvement processes which tack on special education; approaches to licensure which, in Iowa, delineate no less than 42 endorsement areas (Board of Educational Examiners, 1997) and are just beginning to look at unified requirements for special and general educators; college textbooks which commonly target audiences that are either special education or general education (e.g., Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997; Olson & Platt, 1996); and those funding streams which do not blend dollars to serve all students more appropriately.

### Common Characteristics

Research on inclusion as it relates to high school students is emerging. Several common characteristics of successful programs have been identified. A composite from Burnette (1996), Cole and McLeskey (1997), King-Sears (1997), Rogers (1993), and Thousand and Villa (1995) yielded the following characteristics: visionary leadership, refocused use of assessment, supports for staff and students, funding, effective parent involvement, classroom models and effective teaching practices, systemic transition planning process, building and opportunities accessible to all, and collaboration. These components are useful in that they set some parameters for identifying an inclusive setting while being flexible enough to serve in individual situations.

While this is not an all-inclusive list, understanding each component helps one begin to understand characteristics that may be present and to what degree in a high school inclusionary environment. Each component impacts the roles of the special and general education

teachers as well as their perceptions of inclusion. Collectively they provide criteria for selection of the site to be studied. A common, general understanding of each is valuable in that interpretations or variations may help clarify the teachers' voice in an attempt to understand team members' perceptions of inclusion. Following is a brief investigation of each characteristic.

### Visionary Leadership

Sashkin (1995) states, "Visionary Leadership theory brings together the concepts and research findings of many scholars and researchers, as they relate to transformational leadership" (p. 5). He further explains the behaviors, personal characteristics, and organizational culture which compose visionary leadership. In education, visionary leadership is based on positive views regarding students' ability to learn, teachers' skills in teaching, and the mutual benefits of inclusionary practices. Imbedded in policy and practice is a commitment to maintain a caring community.

Visionary leadership should reflect support to those assisting one another. Cole and McKeskey (1997) highlight the major role that administrators can have in facilitating teachers working together.

Administrators play a major role in developing positive teaching partnerships. Teachers need to know that their administration will provide the necessary support. This may include having administrators cover teachers' classrooms so they can have time to meet to reflect on the program. It may mean that administrators facilitate staff development needs and ensure that schedules for students and staff are appropriate. Administrators need to provide the emotional support necessary when times get tough, and provide a "safety net" for teachers by communicating that they will not have the "limb chopped off" if they step out and try new and different things. (p. 8)

Visionary leadership welcomes positive change. King-Sears (1997) discusses the importance of having a solid foundation upon which to build academic practices embracing inclusion. Her foundation has four components, one of which is the change process. She states, "Educators also need to feel actively involved in their school's change toward inclusion, and they need to participate in decisions made about changes. If educators are not involved in the development and implementation efforts, changes toward inclusion are less likely to be sustained" (p. 3). Inherent in such a posture regarding change are high degrees of trust, respect, and the encouragement of flexibility.

Another component in her foundation is shared vision. She very succinctly describes the core of that vision. "Perhaps the most important start toward a shared vision that supports inclusion is that educators value and believe that students with and without disabilities should be together more in their learning and playing experiences at school" (p. 3).

Active communication of a dynamic vision for the school gives teachers the very real sense of solid administrative support. Visionary leadership provides fertile ground for changes in curriculum and assessment. How can the success of the vision (improved student learning) be measured?

#### Refocused Use of Assessment

Assessments for students commonly refer to some form or forms of evaluating student progress toward predetermined expectations, often in competition with peers. Determination of the need for special services has historically rested on the bell curve, competitive nature of

cognitive assessment. The academic challenge for select students was often reinforced with the results of group administered, standardized, multiple choice exams. Further testing with individually administered intelligence and adaptive behavior assessments resulted in labels identifying a student's deficits which provided a perceived prognosis and subsequent program placement. By law these initial placement decisions are to be reevaluated every three years. Only recently has the need to administer subsequent IQ tests been questioned and the emphasis moved toward testing as a means of providing information with more educational relevance. Students in special education are assessed regarding their individual progress towards goals and objectives established by the individual education programming (IEP) team. Often criterion referenced tests are valid for this evaluation.

As educators welcome changes in curriculum and instruction, the means of measuring student success have changed as well. This is true for both general and special education students. Researchers such as King-Sears (1997) report and support the use of more authentic assessments as a means to build greater understanding of students. Authentic assessments can be created for individual or group evaluation and often result in products such as portfolios or pragmatic creations. Carefully designed and interpreted these assessments allow students to excel and teachers to gain valuable insights into teaching and learning.

Any time large group evaluations are given, educators must look carefully at the assessment information and the tested group in order to accurately determine the effectiveness of the instruction. King-Sears (1997) suggests:

When general educators use instructional methods with heterogeneous groups of learners, to look only at the group's average score is not sufficient. Disaggregated scores from heterogeneous groups can provide the teacher with more specific information about how each group, or representative students from each group, is performing. By looking at the performance of the varied groups within the classroom, the teacher can make more informed decisions about how well the instruction is working. (p. 13)

The desire to have students with disabilities included in as many as possible of the same testing and evaluation experiences as their non disabled classmates is clearly stated in IDEA, 1997. Part b, Section 614 directs the IEP to provide

A statement of any individual modifications in the administration of State or districtwide assessment of student achievement that are needed in order for the child to participate in such assessment; and if the IEP Team determines that the child will not participate in a particular State or districtwide assessment of student achievement (or part of such an assessment) a statement of - why that assessment is not appropriate for the child; and how the child will be assessed. (d.1.A.v.II)

### Supports for Staff and Students

Logic would suggest that staff-to-student ratios and class sizes be kept low. Research repeats this theme by requesting that care be taken not to overload classrooms with students with disabilities (e.g., Cole & McLeskey, 1997). This has two possible implications. The first would be the desire not to place students with disabilities in a classroom that is already overloaded. The second is a complaint aired by those seeking a natural balance in student population within classrooms instead of classes that are heavily laden with students with special educational needs.

King-Sears (1997) quotes several researchers in emphasizing the significance of systemic staff development, both initial and on-going.

One paradigm that needs to be broken is the idea that access to specialists is only through the special education teacher. Rogers (1993) states, "In schools where inclusion works well, it is important for the classroom teacher to have regular access to support staff who can help the teacher find equipment or procedures which permit all the children in the class to benefit from the instruction" (p. 4).

This statement also introduces the need for flexible planning time. Creative approaches are needed if key players need to merge their calendars. As a result of research with a secondary inclusion program for students with mild disabilities, Cole and McLeskey (1997) stated:

Teachers' time with students is improved as a result of their time with colleagues. Providing time for teachers to share must become a priority if ongoing reflection, renewal, and growth is to take place. Teachers consistently mention time as a key to the development of partnerships and professional growth. (p. 10)

The computer and other technologies hold the promise of being vehicles which provide meaningful support for teachers. In-class use of software in academic areas such as reading (Higgins & Boone, 1993) and math (Woodward & Carnine, 1993) provide direct support to teachers.

The advances in educational technology for students with mild mental disabilities are creating opportunities for success where none existed before. Organization tools, laptops, multimedia, and word prediction give students the means to complete well-written, organized assignments that truly reflect their knowledge and skills. As a result, student self-esteem has risen, along with grades, and some students have been able to continue their education without further special education assistance. (New Technologies/Applications for Special Education. (1996)

Administrative tools which provide support to teacher, e.g., Fuchs, Fuchs, and Hamlett (1993), Rule and Stowitschek (1991) are other relevant resources.

Believing that, "Computers offer an effective means to monitor individual performance in a group setting" (p. 168), Hayden, Gersten and Carnine (1992) researched the use of a computer networking system in middle school math classes containing students with disabilities. They "examined the extent of training and support needed by regular classroom teachers utilizing the system with their existing curriculum to teach mainstreamed students with learning disabilities" (p. 169). None of the participating teachers had certification nor specialized training for teaching students with disabilities. Both students and teachers found that use of the computer network was an effective means of instruction. This integration of technology found:

The teachers reported that the question-by-question data generated by the networking system was helpful to them to more precisely determine whether students in the entire class understood lesson concepts. This in turn was effective in shaping the increased use of effective instructional procedures such as guided practice, individualized feedback and expanded explanations. (p. 176)

The pragmatic, cooperative approaches to curriculum foster numerous opportunities for student to student interactions while offering instructors new understandings of the dynamics of learning and teaching. Maheady, Harper, and Pomerantz (1997) delineate such an approach with peer-assisted learning. This alternative set of teaching strategies is designed to facilitate students helping one another "improve academic or interpersonal performance. Peer roles can be direct (tutoring) or indirect (modeling) and can focus on academic and/or social behavior of both" (p. 1). In the three program examples they share, peer-assisted learning is implemented for the entire classroom after very systematic training and with follow-up evaluations. "The

primary focus is on mastery of basic academic skill; acquisition and retention of factual information" (p. 1). They found that peer-assisted learning "offers a variety of effective, feasible, and socially acceptable instructional options" (p. 7).

Implementation of some of the classroom models and effective teaching practices discussed later in this section as well as an increased understanding of human nature and the mind arm teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to become mutually supportive of one another. As with the support offered with technology, brain-based learning and new discoveries in intelligences (Gardner, 1993) are exciting areas for further research specifically as they are applied to inclusive educational environments.

### Funding

Initial special education legislation was powerful in part because it clearly identified the dollars and methods of disbursement to accompany it. This same asset has become a liability in the quest for inclusion, as the dollars were designated for use with labeled children only. This led to an emphasis on both labeling and the isolated programs of the 1970s and 1980s. In order to facilitate the supports needed for meaningful inclusion, NCERI (1995) reported;

The federally funded Center for Special Education Finance confirms earlier research, namely that the particular funding formula used by a state has consequences for student placement and inclusion. In most states, the funding formulas used to support special education encourage separate programs. School districts reported wanting this changed, so that funding would follow students. In Vermont, for example, the changes in the funding formula were reported as an essential factor in their promotion of inclusive education for all students. (p. 4)



The approach to teaching diverse populations increasingly requires shared resources. Funding is one of those resources.

### Effective Parent Involvement

Parents were instrumental in creating special education opportunities for their children, have remained actively involved in their children's schooling, and continue to monitor, if not initiate, legislative and programmatic actions designed to enhance learning for their children. As the dynamics of special education move towards more inclusive environments, parents must maintain their proactive stance. In their study of inclusive education programs, the National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI, 1998) found,

Inclusive schools report encouraging parental participation through family support services, as well as in the development of educational programs which engage parents as co-learners with and teachers of their children. Programs that bring a wide array of services to children in the school setting report at least two sets of benefits--the direct benefits to the children and the opportunities provided for parents and other family members to become involved in school-based activities. (p. 4)

Parents who are most satisfied with their child's educational environment are those who feel that they are included in ways that go beyond what is dictated through legislation. These parents sense they belong, that they are fully a part of the total school community. Some activities which create this feeling include participation in the school's parent and teacher organization, receipt of school newsletter(s), being asked to volunteer in the school, and being invited to regular parent-teacher conferences.

### Classroom Models and Effective Teaching Practices

It is in the classroom where the "rubber meets the road." What is taught and how it is taught offer the greatest potential to positively effect learning for all involved. Thus a clearly defined curriculum and the use of proven effective classroom models and teaching practices are essential. No longer is the teacher an autonomous entity behind closed doors. Teachers are now co-teachers, parallel teachers, consultants, team members or mentors. Their responsibilities expand beyond direct instruction or service provision to research, collaboration, leadership, and curriculum design (Roth, 1997a). A rich, broad menu of options is essential for as Cole and McLeskey (1997) state:

Secondary-level teachers of students with disabilities face a broad range of demands on their time to address these curricular areas. Clearly, priorities must be developed regarding which curricular areas should be emphasized, and teachers of student with disabilities must organize and use their time to maximize their efficiency and effectiveness. We readily admit that there are no easy answers regarding what inclusive school programs in secondary schools should entail, how they should be organized, what should be taught, where instruction should occur, and so forth. Indeed, from our perspective, each secondary program should be tailored to the specific needs of a given setting, thus precluding the possibility of a 'one-size fits all' model program. (p. 3)

This chapter earlier addressed the issue of supports for teachers. It is important to recognize the need for expertise that is readily available to the classroom teacher. Expecting one individual to be expert in the multiple factors now recognized as potential practices or sources for inclusive education is unrealistic. The need for adequate staff development as mentioned earlier is equally reaffirmed here. Staff development must include preliminary skill training and follow-up or

ongoing intervention as teachers become adept in selecting, implementing, and evaluating models and effective teaching practices.

"Rarely can one person accomplish inclusion alone, and never can inclusion be successful using only one method. Just as a synergy occurs when people work together, so does a synergy occur when students with disabilities are exposed to a variety of effective practices" (King-Sears, 1997, p. 18). Earlier in her article King-Sears shares 10 practices that, when used appropriately and in combination with each other, enhance inclusive education. Before sharing her list she cautions, "Educators can--and should--personalize implementation but not delete critical elements that contribute to the power of the method" (p. 5). Her list, while not designed nor intended to be all inclusive, does reflect elements common to other researchers (e.g., Burnette, 1996; Cole & McLeskey, 1997; Rogers, 1993). These elements are: cooperative learning, strategy instruction, differentiation, self-determination, explicit instruction, curriculum-based assessment, generalization techniques, collaboration, proactive behavior management, and peer supports (p. 4). Other methods which are commonly mentioned include; multi-level instruction, activity-based learning, mastery learning, use of technology, and tutoring programs.

#### Systemic Transition Planning Process

Transition for secondary students addresses issues of concern as they move from the academic world into adult life. Careful planning is paramount. So significant is the need for a systemic transition planning process that the newest federal legislation (IDEA, 1997) mandates consideration of transition issues beginning at age 14 for students with

special needs. Anticipating the future for the student with special needs education reaches beyond the traditional school environment, thus posing potential opportunities for targeted cooperation among an array of folks. Every effort is made to help the student be a full member of his adult environment. In this endeavor, the coordinated energies parallel those needed to include the student in the natural high school environment. Storms, DeStefano, and O'Leary (1996) have created a guide to assist the team identify desired post-school outcomes and thus devise an appropriate transition plan which is a part of the IEP. With their permission, following is the nine-step transitional process.

#### "A Suggested Process for Transition Planning"

##### Before the IEP meeting

1. Assist student and families to determine needs, preferences, and interests related to life after high school. Teach them to actively participate in the IEP meeting. Assess student needs, preferences and interests.
2. Formally invite the student to participate in the IEP process and meeting.
3. Provide written notice of the IEP meeting to parents, students, and outside agencies.
4. If the student chooses not to attend the IEP meeting, use other means to gather information about his or her needs, interests, and preferences.
5. If an invited agency chooses not to attend the IEP meeting, use other means to ensure they participate in the planning of transition services. Document these efforts and include them in the IEP.

##### During the IEP meeting

6. Conduct the IEP meeting to actively involve the student and family. Review the student's present level of performance needs, interests and preferences, in order to guide the development of the following:
  - a. an outcome-oriented post-school vision statement;

- b. a statement of needed transition services;
- c. coordinated activities in instruction, community experiences employment and other post-school living objectives needed to achieve the post-school outcomes;
- d. daily living skills activities and functional vocational evaluation, if appropriate;
- e. annual goals and objectives for coordinated activities that are the responsibility of the school; and
- f. identification of who will provide and/or pay for the above.

After the IEP meeting

- 7. Provide instruction, experiences, and services outlined in the IEP.
- 8. Conduct follow-up activities to determine if the transition services are provided as planned.
- 9. Reconvene the IEP team to plan alternative strategies if the transition services are not provided as planned. (p. 14)

### Building and Opportunities Accessible to All

In describing what inclusion looks like, Rogers (1993) writes:

Effective inclusion is characterized by its virtual invisibility. One cannot go to look at the special education classrooms in an inclusive school because there are none. Children with disabilities are not clustered into groups of persons with similar disabilities, but are dispersed in whatever classroom they would otherwise attend. (p. 4)

Such a posture demands that the physical building and educational opportunities be accessible to all.

### Collaboration

No discussion of inclusion is complete without addressing collaboration. Inclusion calls for a process of collaborative planning and teaming, which yields assistance and cooperative problem-solving. At its best it is a voluntary effort based on trust and respect and allows for integrated efforts and resources among all teachers. Communication as co-equals is vital. Literature regarding collaboration as it relates to the inclusion of students with special learning needs identifies four

categories: definition, benefits, characteristics, and barriers to implementation.

### Definition

Friend and Bursack (1996) define collaboration as "a chosen style for interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared responsibility for decision making as they work toward a common goal" (p. 4). There is no limited focus on an individual student, but rather a general applicability. Hillman, Panyan, and Dykstra (1994) discuss collaboration as shared responsibility and authority for basic policy decision making. Collaboration differs from cooperation as it involves more than an agreement to work together and goes beyond the distribution of roles and tasks. It is a relationship demanding change in how people interact as co-equals. Schrage (1990) states, "The thing that distinguishes collaborative communities from most other communities is the desire to construct new meanings about the world through interaction with others" (p. 48). Pugach and Johnson (1995) stress further the importance of interaction grounded in a shared vision and a negotiated common goal which transcends individual interests.

### Benefits

There are six commonly cited benefits that result from collaborative efforts: improved learning for all, increased planning, stimulates new ideas (innovation), breaks isolation/provides emotional support, empowerment, and adaptability and reliability (Hillman et al., 1994; Inger, 1996; McIntosh & Shipman, 1996; Pugach & Johnson, 1995).

Improved learning for all. Participants with divergent expertise working collaboratively in educational, social, and commercial settings, unilaterally report increased knowledge. The struggle to converge on a common goal creates disequilibrium, often in the form of direct conflict. Collegiality among individuals with differing knowledge, experiences, and skills is the catalyst that can enhance learning for all. Lieberman (1986, p. 16), states, "Conflict in collaboration is inevitable; it has potential for productive learning." Properly done, collaboration can result in increased learning. Perhaps this increased learning stimulates a desire for further learning.

Increased planning. Another commonly cited benefit of collaboration is the increase in planning through structured activities involving members of the collaborative team. Collaboration creates time for long and short term vision and goal setting, implementation, and follow-through. Teams can create a philosophically based vision, identify goals, design and implement plans, and complete reflective evaluation as this ongoing cycle begins once again. Increased planning defines the focus and enhances productivity.

Stimulates new ideas (innovation). Attempts to reach collaboration among diverse individuals may result in innovative ideas. Brainstorming is a technique often used in the research as part of the decision making necessary for collaboration (Hillman et al., 1994; Inger, 1996; McIntosh & Shipman, 1996; Pugach & Johnson, 1995). The Council for Exceptional Children stresses the creative solutions generated when persons with diverse backgrounds voluntarily agree to

work together in their quest for solutions to mutually defined problems (1992, pp. 1-2).

Breaks isolation/provides emotional support. Teachers especially report that collaboration breaks the sense of isolation created by the traditional educational paradigm (Hillman et al., 1994). Pugach and Johnson (1995) refer to collaboration in its many forms as a means to go from isolation to interaction. The interdependence developed allows individuals to experience a sharing that can transcend the task at hand. Respect is gained as the dignity of risk is experienced by all.

Empowerment. Sashkin states, "A leader who facilitates collaboration actually empowers all participants. This empowerment is an important characteristic of transformational leadership" (1995, p. 7). In schools this empowerment has a domino effect, as empowered administrators facilitate empowered teachers who facilitate empowered students. Such empowerment has positive ramifications in increased productivity and an enhanced sense of self-worth.

Adaptability and reliability. It would naturally follow then, that this improved self-confidence would result in more adaptable and reliable persons. One should not confuse adaptability with constant change but rather see it as developing flexibility while remaining focused.

### Characteristics

The characteristics of productive collaborative activities are manifested in the skills and activities of the participants. The Council



for Exceptional Children (1992) lists seven important things participants in collaboration must be able to do: active listening, clear responding, relationship building, problem solving, negotiating, conflict management, and cooperative planning.

Scholars frequently refer to three others: brainstorming/consensus building, opportunity/time, and trust/interdependence.

Development of communication skills, group dynamics, problem solving, and time utilization summarize these 10 skills and knowledge needed for collaborative work. These skills are complex and interrelated. Persons who listen actively and respond clearly are perhaps well able to build positive relationships. Any problem poses potential conflict, which may require compromise and negotiation for resolution. Individuals must be able to engage in give and take. Brainstorming poses numerous options, thus creating multiple choices towards consensus. Co-workers must learn to trust one another. Trust takes time. Once it happens, people can be both dependent upon and depended upon by others. All of these skills and knowledge focus clearly on the value of each individual and his or her unique contributions to the collaborative process.

### Barriers to Implementation

Leaders must recognize barriers and address them directly. Most researchers list several barriers with the potential to impede productive collaboration. Bauwens, Ehlert, Hourcade, and Schrag (1997) conducted a study of general and special educators to assess the perceptions of professional school personnel regarding potential barriers to educational collaboration. They found a consensus between

the two educational areas. They believe that external barriers are more powerful than internal ones. Their list itemizes 30 separate barriers. Many of those further down the list reflect collaboration unique to the inclusion of special education students in the general classroom. The top rated barrier is time, followed by fear of failure, administrative support, cooperation from others, and training in communication skills.

Pugach and Johnson (1995) view communication as the cornerstone of collaboration. They discuss the roadblocks to communication extensively, devoting an entire chapter to "Barriers to Effective Communication." They found that giving advice too quickly is the most common error in communication efforts. To maintain the equality in a collaborative relationship, individuals must explore alternatives to direct advice. When one gives advice too quickly to a colleague, the result may be an insult; it may prompt suggestions that do not fit the person or situation, or even create dependency (p. 90). Other barriers addressed by Pugach and Johnson are false reassurances, misdirected questions, interruptions, clichés, minimizing feelings, and quick fixes.

Collaboration is complex for it involves communication, equality, trust, conflict management, change, consensus building through decision making, and risk taking. It goes beyond being vital for the inclusion of students with special needs for these are the very challenging skills being required by society today. Thus educators preparing students for an improved society must meet this challenge.

Furthermore, collaboration consistently dovetails inclusionary efforts. Cole (1995) focused solely on collaboration in combination with reflective pedagogy in her study of a secondary inclusionary

environment. Suggestions for overcoming the barriers call for developing a process for collaborative planning and teaming, providing assistance and cooperative problem-solving, integrating efforts and resources among all teachers, building upon voluntary participation, building and reinforcing trust and respect, and effectively communicating.

### Summary

This review of the literature on the inclusion of students with special needs into the general education classroom focused on the accepted characteristics of an inclusive educational environment. The unique characteristics of the high school culture and the position that special education be perceived as a part of education are important underlying assumptions. Each of the research based components impacted the roles of the special and general education teachers and provided criteria for selection of the site studied. This study determined which of these roles and what other characteristics may be present in a high school inclusionary environment.

### Chapter 3

#### METHOD AND PROCEDURE

##### Overview

This section explains the fieldwork methodology and the considerations in selecting an approach and site. Before undertaking such a discussion, however, it is imperative that the underlying premises and the question itself be clearly understood.

The introduction of this study established that the newly defined role of the special education teacher is evolving, that each secondary plan for inclusion is individualized to the student and the school, and that common characteristics for successful inclusion at the elementary level have been identified. Ethical and legal mandates call for increasing the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities at all age levels. The efficacy of inclusionary involvement for individual students is determined by each students' staffing or IEP team. This study poses two questions from the perspectives of the team members. What are the characteristics present and to what degree in a high school inclusionary environment? What are the roles of the special education and general education teachers in an inclusionary environment?

Chapter 2 focused on research related especially to those most commonly identified characteristics, explaining components of each. Limited research exists for programs addressing the characteristics or roles in high school environments. These evolving roles in the development and implementation of individualized educational programs

for high school students and some knowledge of what elementary teachers are finding lead naturally to concerns about the characteristics present, the roles of the teachers, and perceptions of the team members in an inclusive high school setting. Thus, the literature review helped focus on both the problem and the methodology.

### Approach

The intent of this study was to reach some understanding of the inclusion of students with cognitive needs in the general curriculum through sound, ethical, single case, descriptive, ethnographic research. Such research requires a natural setting. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985),

Rather, we suggest that inquiry must be carried out in a "natural" setting because phenomena of study, whatever they may be--physical, chemical, biological, social, psychological--take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves. . . . reality constructions cannot be separated from the world in which they are experienced and that any observations that might be made are inevitably time- and context-dependent. No phenomenon can be understood out of relationship to the time and context that spawned, harbored, and supported it. (p. 189)

The question was addressed by striving to gain insights and understandings through careful, thoughtful, and clear descriptions of the situation or context.

The depth and detail of qualitative data can be obtained only by "getting close," physically and psychologically, "to the phenomenon under study" (Patton, 1980, p. 43). As Lofland writes: "The commitment to get close, to be factual, descriptive and quotative, constitutes a significant commitment to represent the participants in their own terms. . . . A major methodological consequence of these commitments is that the qualitative study of people *in situ* is a process of discovery. It is of necessity a process of learning what is happening. It is the observer's task to find out what is fundamental or central to the people or world under observation. (Lofland, quoted in Patton, 1980, pp. 36-37, quoted in Merriam, 1988)

The focus of this qualitative research was on the interactions, actions and perspectives of the teachers surrounding included students. A descriptive, ethnographic methodology was used, allowing for an investigation of these concerns through interviews, observations, and document analysis where appropriate. Merriam (1988) states: "research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p. 3). Interviews, observations, and document analysis are considered dissimilar methods and provide methodological triangulation (Merriam, 1988).

#### Selection of Site

Probable sites for this study were selected based on self-referral. A letter addressing the intent of this study and a working definition of inclusion was sent to each of the 59 high school principals in Iowa's Area Education Agency 11 on June 25, 1997 (see Appendix A). Two administrators responded. These two administrators were then informally interviewed. One responded by encouraging this researcher to take a closer look at their efforts and referring these efforts to an elementary principal who is also their diversity administrator. While his location outside of the high school setting gave cause to reconsider, nonetheless, the parents of three high school students with special educational needs who reside in the district were contacted for their insights. These parents unilaterally requested help towards implementing inclusion for their children.

The second school had been recommended prior to the study by several individuals including the coordinator of student teachers frequently placed there, two college sophomores who had attended there, several parent advocates, and the parent of a child with special needs from the district. Their reputation as a school that welcomes students, including students with special learning needs, made them a strong candidate for study. Their high school principal frequently gives presentations explaining the collaborative teaching in his school. This collaboration is considered their "building block to inclusion." A preliminary visit was made to the school, which will be referred to as Newberg High School (NHS). (Note: All names used will be pseudonyms in order to increase confidentiality.) The principal, Mr. Bass, welcomed the study, as did several staff persons. The study focused on the inclusion of one male and one female severely cognitively impaired high school student in this setting. Parents of both students gave written permission for their child's participation in the study, as well as for themselves. Every effort was made to insure confidentiality and maintain maximum respect for these participants.

There were 600 students enrolled in NHS at the beginning of the 1997-1998 academic year. They are being served by a staff of 48, including 5 special education teachers. Eleven percent of the student population has been identified as students with special learning needs. NHS has a traditional eight period day. Currently 25 classes are taught as collaborative classes and 5 classes are considered as practical classes. Collaborative classes are those general education courses which include students with identified special learning needs. General

education and special education teachers work together in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the curriculum. Practical classes are typically taught in a self-contained special education environment exclusively for students with disabilities. The special education teachers plan, implement, and assess the curriculum for these classes to meet the needs of the individual students. The school designs common planning time for the teachers when possible, and provides substitutes twice monthly for peer development and collaborative planning, giving each individual teacher a total of four days during the school year specifically for this involvement. The guidance staff works with identified students to schedule them into collaborative classes.

According to the Newberg Chamber of Commerce spokesperson, Newberg is a suburban, family-oriented community which prides itself on its location, quality of life, and a school system with an excellent reputation. The 1994 population was 6,350 in approximately 2,000 households. In 1992, 39.1% of the graduating seniors attended a four-year college and 41.7% went to a technical or two-year college.

#### Protection of Rights of Participants

Prior to the study, the dissertation proposal was reviewed and approved by Drake University's Human Subjects Research Review Committee. All participation in this study was voluntary. Adults and students signed an agreement that briefly explained the study and their rights, including the right to withdraw from the study. Where appropriate, parents or guardians signed the participant agreement on their child's behalf prior to any student participation in the study. Appendix B



contains a copy of the written participant agreement. Pseudonyms are used throughout the reporting process.

A copy of the dissertation was provided to the principal who enthusiastically granted permission for the study. Confidentiality and respect for the participants was maintained throughout the study.

### Naturalistic Inquiry

Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to three phases for naturalistic inquiries: orientation and overview, focused exploration, and member checks and closure. These phases are present in this study. Orientation and overview began with the initial site visit. This time of introductions and tours provided important background information. An initial interview with Mr. Bass as the principal was a part of this phase. The study moved into the second phase or focused exploration with the initial teacher interviews and continued through observations, parent and student interviews, document analysis, follow-up interviews, and journaling. This focused exploration was time bound so that a clear snapshot of characteristics and roles could be taken. Data were accumulated over a six-week period during the first half of the second semester. This gave enough time to get a thick, rich description unblurred by extraneous variables that can evolve over expanded time frames.

Transcripts were shared with the interviewees for corrections, clarification, or additions, thus providing a mechanism for member checks. As the naturalistic inquiry reached closure a second type of member check was conducted. The principal audited the emerging themes

for consistency and to protect dependability and confirmability. Transferability of data is insured through thick description. Journaling by this researcher addresses trustworthiness as well.

### Fieldwork

Fieldwork for this study followed three phases: planning procedures, collecting data, and analyzing data. Following the advice of Glesne and Peshkin (as cited by Ducharme, Licklider, Matthes, & Vannatta, 1995) a variety of data gathering techniques were used: initial interview, observation, second interview, and document analysis where appropriate.

Initial interviews with the school administrator, parent(s), students, and those teachers responsible for the students' inclusion began this study. These meetings were held during school hours for the staff and students and at convenient times for the parents. The meetings were audio-recorded and offered the opportunity for mutual orientation as the investigator became familiar with the students' and teachers' environments and they became cognizant of the focus of this study. Participant releases were secured. This series of meetings constituted the initial interviews.

At these initial interviews the interviewees responded to the following queries:

What are the characteristics of Newberg High School's inclusive environment?

What roles do the participating teachers have in designing, implementing, and evaluating an individualized educational program for the student with cognitive disabilities?

The interviews were designed to listen to the teachers' voices; to get a sense of their perspective; how they are thinking, feeling, and interpreting the context; and to learn of prior experiences they have had relative to the inclusion of students with special educational needs into the general curriculum. The initial interviews were semi-structured to facilitate such input. Merriam (1988) states,

In the semistructured interview, certain information is desired from all the respondents. These interviews are guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. (p. 74)

The open nature of the two queries stated above follow this format. Initial interviews lasted no more than 50 minutes each.

The Observation Data Sheet (Appendix C) was used to record activities during semi-formal observations. It contains items gleaned from the review of the literature and space for documenting unpredicted objective data. Observations were scheduled to follow the interviews in a timely manner. They were conducted so as to produce the least intrusion into the teaching and learning environment, yet gave opportunities for the observation of a variety of activities relevant to inclusion. Each student was observed in a variety of educational settings and situations: self-contained classroom, with and without other students present; French I; Foods; Physical Education; in other

general areas of the school including the office and hallways; and the young man at his parent-teacher conference.

Also included in the focused exploration was the examination of relevant documents such as students' IEPs, the school's student and faculty handbooks, daily schedules, etc. These documents provided valuable insights and triangulation of common themes for this study, as triangulation is one technique for establishing trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that disciplined, rigorous research must address four issues: "truth value," applicability, consistency, and neutrality. For the naturalistic paradigm these four criteria all come under the heading of trustworthiness and are identified as: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Triangulation is an accepted technique for use with activities in the field that lend credibility. The prolonged engagement (six weeks) and persistent observation also fall into this technique category.

A second interview followed with questions precipitated by the previous experiences. Data analysis from the initial interviews, observations, and document analysis targeted the content and participants of the follow-up interviews. This query was designed to get a richer picture of the context and was more structured than the initial interview.

The researcher journaled all visits and activities. This journal is ongoing and provides documentation of the researcher's reflections and subjective type information. It also serves as a running account of the activities and timelines of the study. Time was scheduled following

each interview and observation for entering reflective data in the journal.

### Data Analysis

All interviews were taped and the tapes were transcribed in their entirety by a transcriptionist outside of the study. Carefully noted journal entries and observations also provided data. The interviews, journal notes, observation data, and relevant documents were coded using the constant comparative method of data analysis of Glaser and Strauss (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This proposal was reviewed and the data were organized topically. As the data were reread, themes or ideas were noted in the margins. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to this process as "unitizing." These units of information were then linked with color-coded tabs into common themes or categories in an effort to "organize what I have seen, heard, and read so that I could make sense of what I have learned" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 127). During this process the principal was asked to check for consistency and thus provide a second member check to insure trustworthiness. Merriam (1988) suggests that data collection and analysis be congruent activities. "Simultaneous analysis and data collection allows the researcher to direct the data collection phase more productively, as well as develop a data base that is both relevant and parsimonious" (p. 145).

Beyond the topical narrative and phenomenological description, data analysis and interpretation involved making inferences and developing theory. To do so required the comparison and synthesis of prior investigations with this study, remaining cognizant that by design

this study is bound by time, place and ethnographic context. Final copies of the study were shared with key site participants.

## Chapter 4

### FINDINGS

#### Overview

One method to enhance internal validity in qualitative research is the use of triangulation. Therefore multiple data sources were examined in the present study. Ten initial interviews were conducted with the school administrator, parents, students, and those teachers responsible for the students' inclusion. Those interviewed were: Mr. Bass, the high school principal; Mark, a student with special needs, and his parents; Eve, the French I teacher; Betty, the Culinary Arts teacher; Joan, the special education teacher; a young man and a young woman from French I class; and a young man and a young woman from Culinary Arts class. The high school principal and the special education teacher were each interviewed a second time. The interviewees were selected because of their potential to provide insights about the research problem. With the exception of the interview with Mark and his parents, all of the interviews were conducted individually. Each one was audio recorded and transcribed. These transcripts were presented to the adults interviewed for corrections, clarification, or additions, thus creating a member check.

Observations took place in three general education classrooms: Foods, French I, and Physical Education. Other observations were conducted in the self-contained setting, the common areas of the school including the halls and offices, and at Mark's parent-teacher

conference. The investigator sketched rough floor plans of the classrooms to diagram the general positioning and proximity of students and adults. The setting, people, and activities were described and participant statements noted. The observation form provided ample space for observer comments.

The three key public documents analyzed were an employment advertisement in the Des Moines Register announcing special education and coaching opportunities, the Newberg High School Parent-Student Handbook and Activity Handbook, and the Newberg High School 1998-1999 Curriculum Guide. The researcher also chronicled contacts; visit, interview, and student schedules; and reflections in a personal journal which became a part of the data.

This triangulation led to the discovery of multiple perspectives, philosophies, expectations, and practices. The data were coded using the constant comparative method of data analysis and then unitized. These units of information were linked into categories or themes. Several themes emerged which were consistent across the data sources. This section will present and analyze the data. It will provide some fundamental background information before sharing the emergent environmental characteristics and identified teachers' roles.

#### Background information

Four significant pieces of background information are important to understanding the data. They include the two students in special education, the experiences of the three key teachers studied, the



collaborative experiences of the faculty and staff at NHS, and the unique position of the high school principal.

#### The Two Students, Mark and Marie

The focus of this study was the environment, including the people in that environment, surrounding the inclusion of two students with severe cognitive disabilities primarily from the teachers' perspectives. Mark and Marie are freshmen at NHS. Both students use a wheelchair for mobility, have cerebral palsy, are diagnosed as severely disabled, live with their respective parents, have the same special education teacher, and follow very similar daily schedules. They are included in the same academic classrooms at the same time of day and are each accompanied by his and her own paraprofessional at all times. While each has his and her own individualized educational program, they share comparable goals relative to increased participation in the total school environment and improving communication and social skills.

Mark will generally respond to direct, uncomplicated questions, however his response is unpredictable as he has a tendency to parrot a recent word, or remark. When he gives a response, it is difficult to tell whether he is giving his opinion or relying on these habitual speech patterns. This is the first year that Mark has attended school within his home community. He was previously bussed to a neighboring segregated educational environment. Mark is an only child.

Marie communicates primarily with facial and bodily expressions. She has attended school within her home community for several years. Marie has an older sister who is a senior attending the same school.

Both students begin their day with special education staff engaged in addressing basic life functions. The paraprofessional assigned to Mark accompanies him to the kitchen for breakfast. There are several general education students who take advantage of NHS's breakfast program as well. Two special education staff people accompany Marie to the bathroom. Eventually both students, two paraprofessionals and Joan, the special education teacher, rejoin in the special education room. They spend the remainder of the first period reading, working with manipulatives, and talking.

Marie and Mark attend French I with their paraprofessionals during second period. It is not unusual for their special education teacher to accompany them. Eve is the French teacher and has a total of 18 students in this second hour class. The other 16 general education students had French I first semester, but this is the first semester for Mark and Marie. Students learn about France, the French people, and the language. Students typically sit in two rows of desks arranged as a horseshoe, which allows Eve to circulate among the seated students.

Math is taught third hour by Joan in the special education classroom. Another student with less severe disabilities joins them for this time. Each student engages in individually determined math activities.

The next two class periods are spent in general education environments. Fourth hour is physical education. According to Joan:

Fourth hour they go to PE, which is tumbling and dance. It's all regular education students in there. They just love it. They just love going down there. They get to listen to music and Marie gets out of her chair and walks; and Mark stretches, moves his arms as he dances and things like that.

Foods class is held during the fifth hour. The home economics room is approximately 3 meters wide and 6 meters deep. It is divided into two very distinct areas. The entrance to the room is near the corner along the 3-meter wall and opens to an area with four tables which comfortably seats six people each, a demonstration area with a counter and overhead mirror, and the teacher's desk. Storage or bulletin board space occupy three walls. The fourth side opens into the second area which houses four kitchens. Counter space separates these two areas, with no visual block above them. Inclusion here takes a different approach. The Culinary Arts teacher, Betty, has a small group of general education students working at the tables near the door while the special education students and staff are using a kitchen in the far corner of the room. The two groups each work on their coursework in their respective areas as the Culinary Arts teacher moves between the two groups. At least two special education staff are always with Mark and Marie. A volunteer general education student and a less involved special education student are part of this class as well.

Next, both students accompanied by their paraprofessionals, go to lunch with general education students. Two periods devoted to basic bodily functions including using the restroom, required stretching exercises, fine motor skills practice and development, and leisure skills or break-type activities in the special education room follow lunch. It is common to have students from general education read or work with Mark and Marie during this time.

The last period of the school day provides work, physical activity, and social interaction opportunities for Mark and Marie. They

collect attendance sheets from the classrooms throughout the building and deliver them to the office. Mark clearly understands that this is an important job. Marie attempts to wheel her own chair during part of this journey, and both students take time to greet people they meet in the halls.

While this schedule is generally followed, it is important to note that the special education students and their staff take outings about twice each month that cause them to miss some of their inclusive classes.

### Three Key Teachers

There are numerous adults interacting with Mark and Marie daily, however this study focused on three teachers who were most closely observed and interviewed as they have the most consistent interaction with these students. They were Joan, the special education teacher; Eve, the French teacher; and Betty, the Culinary Arts teacher. This is the first year at NHS for all three of these women. Joan was a paraprofessional working with special education students in the middle school and is finishing her endorsement in special education. Eve is an eighth-year teacher with a lot of firsts this year: "It's my first year in this building, my first year with this textbook, my first year I've ever had four different classes that I teach seven hours a day. This is a first in a lot of ways."

Betty shared a similar background of several years of previous teaching experiences, but confronted this year with new surroundings, new faces, and new materials. She is also expecting to regain the adjoining classroom that was an original part of the department as a new

addition reaches fruition and the current resident moves to his new space.

None of these women have co-taught, worked collaboratively, or been responsible for facilitating the inclusion of high school students with severe cognitive disabilities until this year.

### Collaborative Experiences of the Faculty and Staff

NHS has a reputation as a school that welcomes students, including students with special learning needs. Evidence of this publicly stated philosophy is in the following employment advertisement from the Des Moines Register:

Newberg Schools is a progressive suburban district located just south of the Des Moines Airport. Due to retirement and professional growth there will be several openings in the area of Special Education for the 1998-99 school year. Newberg's Special Education program leads in the area of inclusion of special needs students. Newberg provides a service model as opposed to a program model. Special education teachers are in the regular classroom all or most of the day. Application materials are due no later than Wednesday, March 18, 1998.

### **Elementary and Secondary Special Education Positions for 1998-99. Coaching Opportunities for 1998-99.**

Please send letter of application, resume, include copy of teaching certificate, transcripts, and have credentials sent to: EOE (p. 22L).

Collaboration is considered their "building block to inclusion."

The NHS principal and select members of the faculty have given presentations to other interested teachers and administrators at conferences or to those who visit NHS. They explain the collaborative teaching at NHS. According to Mr. Bass:

Things change as you get to be a secondary student, and that's my speech topic. It's always collaborative teaching as a building block to inclusion, because you can include kids easily in them, and that's a good way to start. And I think once you start it's

easy to say, "I would like to have this student try your class even though they may not be able to do a nickel's worth." I think the benefit for everyone involved is still there.

It is important to note that it wasn't until Mark and Marie arrived at the beginning of this school year, that these activities encompassed students with severe cognitive disabilities. While numerous faculty are trained and experienced in collaborative teaching as it applies to students with mild or moderate disabilities, none of these people was involved in this study. They were not involved because they are not working directly with Mark and Marie this semester.

#### Position of the High School Principal

Mr. Bass, the high school principal, is Marie's father. The dynamics created by this dual role of parent and administrator make NHS unique. Faculty and staff spoke freely of this biological tie. Betty addressed it as she was discussing peer responsiveness.

One of the kids said that Marie was Mr. Bass's daughter. Another was like (pause). He couldn't believe it. (Pause) He just didn't know. You could just see the shock on his face. That put a human side on Mr. Bass that you would have never dreamed was there. Because that is just kind of (pause). You only go there when you're in trouble.

Mr. Bass's dual role is addressed later in this chapter as one of the important characteristics which support the inclusion of Mark and Marie in the academic and social life of NHS. However, the significance of a father as administrator should not be underestimated, and is therefore addressed in this chapter overview as well.

## Characteristics

This section presents those recurrent themes identified by the subjects as the characteristics that contribute to the inclusion of students with severe cognitive disabilities at NHS.

### Schools Mission Statement and Guiding Principles

The central tenets of a school are embodied in its statement of mission and the principles that guide its policy. These are both included in the NHS Parent-Student Handbook and Activity Handbook as follows:

#### NEWBERG HIGH SCHOOL STATEMENT OF MISSION

Newberg High School will ensure socially responsible learners who will demonstrate creativity and problem solving skills. This will be accomplished by teaching a challenging, relevant, and diverse curriculum in a safe, stimulating environment.

#### Policy Title: Statement of Guiding Principles

The Board of Education recognizes its obligation and duty to provide an educational program equally available to all young people of the school district. The Board of Education believes that all children should have the opportunity to be educated to the full extent of their abilities, aptitudes, capabilities, and interest through a program that recognizes and provides for the individual differences of all children in the school district. Innovation and change, based upon thorough research, study, deliberation, and evaluation shall be encouraged.

Inquiries regarding compliance with equal education opportunity shall be directed to the superintendent by writing to the Central Administrative Office, Title IX Compliance Officer, 906 School Avenue or by telephoning 555-6067. Equal opportunities in programs shall be provided to all students regardless of race, national origin, sex, or disability. The superintendent shall take affirmative steps to integrate students in attendance centers and course enrollment data shall be collected on the basis of race, national origin, sex and disability, and shall be reviewed and updated annually. (p. 8)

The emphasis on equality of availability and the provision for individual differences are especially significant for students with special learning needs, such as those with severe cognitive disabilities.

### Initial Decisions and Placement Process

Inclusion at NHS was initiated through administrative mandate. The principal proceeded with the confidence that his staff could and would accommodate these two students with severe physical and cognitive disabilities, knowing also, that the district Special Education Director is, "probably one of the biggest advocates for kids being in the regular program as much as possible." Their access to participation in academic courses was approached without reservation. The previously cited Mission Statement and Guiding Principles clearly support inclusion. Past practice and the subsequent successful inclusion students with mild disabilities reinforced the administration's belief that they could and should include Mark and Marie.

Mr. Bass emphasized the importance of student-focused decision: commenting specifically about inclusion at the high school as he compared NHS to other special education environments

Nobody else seems to want to get into that. It's program driven. You have a SCIN room; you have a self-contained room; you have a resource room. So a kid comes to you. Where do you put him? We run the other way around where it's kid driven. I think, "Student driven." So a kid comes in. We find out what needs they have.

Following this succinct comparison, he went on to elaborate on the need for options and variety in each student's schedule as determined by the student's needs, not by a program or disability label. This strong administrative position is not to be ignored.



Mark and Marie began high school together. Mark's parents feel that this was a key component in the ability and attitude of NHS towards their son's inclusion. In their minds the school was going to "have different things for Marie, so it would be possible for her to be here. It was like more or less, well, now there will be two of them. It made sense since we will have one."

Another important factor in the decision to include Mark and Marie was the provision of one-on-one support for each student. The perception that having someone familiar with them at all times was the first characteristic shared by both the parents and the special education teacher. The parents treasure the individual attention. The teacher addressed the extra help they each need with their physical activities.

Scheduling and the selection of courses for Mark and Marie was the result of decision making led by Joan, reinforced by the parents, and then imposed on the general education teachers. Eve clearly conveyed this feeling:

OK. I was never asked if I thought it was a good idea if Mark and Marie should be in my classroom. I was never asked if there was anything special or any reason why I wouldn't want them in my class. I was never approached. I was told one day, "Oh, Mark and Marie are going to be in French second semester." I said, "That's interesting." I thought it was real interesting that I had nothing to do with whether or not . . . the fact of whether or not they were going to be there. I went to the aides and to Joan and just said, "What am I supposed to do? I am not trained in any stretch of the imagination for special ed."

I asked Joan in the beginning I said, "Does this mean that this going to be another prep. I have four preps. I don't need five. And I don't need five to be imposed on me rather than asked if maybe it wouldn't be a good idea or it would be a good idea." And she said, "No, you need to do, just do what you always do. You just include them when you can and if something pops to mind where you can include them even more, if not, don't worry." She's

been great. She made it clear, where they can work in, that's great. If they can't well, that's the way it goes.

Further in the interview, Eve explained more about how and why French I may have been chosen as an included course for Mark and Marie.

They have only come second semester, which I thought was bizarre, too. Because they certainly, we started second semester learning numbers 60 through 100 and I just thought it would have been kind of nice if they had known 0 to 60. So that really threw me, because I didn't know. They are not going to have a basis to begin with and to stick them in halfway through the year, I just thought. I was really kind of frightened about all of that and how it would work out.

Before that I had just passed them in the hall and knew both of their names. Oh, well, and down in the lunch room when I would go in to get my lunch, Mrs. H., the native speaker, would be there with Mark and she would say, "Well you know he knows some French." So every day at lunch time, I would say, "Bonjour Mark." And he would say, "Bonjour, Madame." And I ask him, "Sava?" How are you? And he would just say, "Sava bien." And that would be the end of it. But it was every day. I think that might have precipitated the fact that they came into my classroom.

### Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodations and modifications are those conditions in the environment that improve educational opportunities for students with physical and cognitive needs. For this study the term accommodation addresses those environmental factors or alterations that facilitate mobility and physical accessibility for the students. Modifications are those curricular elements or changes that enhance the student's potential for learning.

### Physical Accommodations

Mark and Marie each require a wheelchair for mobility around the building. They can easily move throughout the building as it is physically readily accessible. However, access to appropriate toileting facilities was a challenge. Mark's parents highlighted the need for a

commode. Both students require adult assistance for toileting. Joan expressed the need for a designated restroom as a very high priority. The current arrangements are workable but awkward. They use the nearest women's restroom, and must close it to other students and staff while they are toileting Mark. Joan views this situation as an intrusion on the general education girls; an embarrassment for Mark, and perhaps Marie as well; and an important accommodation to be considered in future building renovations or remodeling.

### Curricular Modifications

An analysis of the data found the special education teacher, Joan, and her associates holding responsibility for the preponderance of classroom modifications. This is a responsibility she accepted from the onset. While cooperative, the other teachers were unanimous in looking towards the special education staff surrounding Mark and Marie as the keys to creating a meaningful curriculum. Little discussion about curricular expectations with and among other adults transpired.

The Culinary Arts course resembled children engaged in parallel play. Two groups operated simultaneously within the same larger physical space, addressed similar curricular objectives, yet were only peripherally aware of each other's activities. When asked about the inclusion of Mark and Marie in his Culinary Arts class, a general education student responded, "It doesn't bother me. I mean, it's OK, 'cause you know, they just do their own thing. Guess I don't think about it much."

Joan recognizes the approach and explains it as:

Then fifth hour we go to foods. I go in there and the two associates go in and then we have a student helper that goes in with us. It's a really small foods class, so we kind of have made a class within a class. We try that out; to go along with the lesson that the teacher is doing with the other students. But we tailor it down so it's a practical thing. Like we make individual pizza this week with biscuits in the can. They just had to smash them out and put the sauce on, then they cooked them. It was a really easy thing.

Observations confirmed this approach as Mark and Marie's group made pancakes as the general education students prepared presentations for a future class time. Betty, the Culinary Arts instructor, made numerous trips between the two groups offering assistance and guidance.

Further probing found that Betty has created flash cards for Mark that cover cooking terms and equipment. She incorporated clip art on the computer to provide clues for him.

The paraprofessional accompanying Mark to French class is a native speaker and does extemporaneous modifications primarily targeted at Mark. She gives him numerous verbal prompts throughout the class period.

Parents view the provision of one-on-one paraprofessional staff as the essential modification. It is comforting for them to think that an adult is immediately available to their children. The paraprofessional is perceived as the person who makes the environment safe, acceptable, and meaningful for the student.

The faculty working with students with less severe limitations is trained and experienced in collaborative educational approaches. An observation of Mark and Marie in physical education was testimony to this training as the instructor was quick to identify Mark and Marie as participants in a game of ultimate kickball. Each was assigned a

different team and the pitcher briefly cued as to simple modifications which allowed them each to propel the ball using their own skills. General education students guided the paraprofessionals as they assisted Mark and Marie through the diamond.

### Staff Characteristics

A discussion of the staff characteristics at NHS must begin with the sense of willing participation, openness, and acceptance experienced by the researcher in this study. Without exception, the staff contacted during data collection treated this study as an opportunity rather than an imposition.

The NHS staff perceive themselves as leaders in the inclusion of adolescent students with cognitive disabilities in the high school environment. This idea permeates their documents as referenced earlier in the paper. It persists primarily because of the extensive preparation and subsequent activities with and for the staff dealing with students with less severe needs than Mark and Marie. This perception is an important characteristic of the staff at NHS. Many of them are directly involved in working collaboratively with each other as a result of having students with disabilities in their classrooms. The high school principal refers to several manifestations of this attitude in his interviews. He is convinced that NHS faculty are committed to collaborative teaching and the inclusion of students with special needs in all classrooms as reflected here: "For the most part the faculty, all the way through, even the music department, is pretty open to kids being in their class."

Characteristics found in the existing collaborative teaching environments at NHS include flexibility, shared responsibility, accommodations, joint decision-making, scheduling, expanding teacher participation, higher student expectations, cooperative learning and other effective teaching methods, portfolio assessment, and recognition of the benefits derived from knowing and using a variety of teaching strategies and approaches. There is the presumption by the administrator and other staff that these same characteristics are inherent in the inclusion of Mark and Marie.

High regard for the administration was prevalent throughout the research. The principal, Mr. Bass, acknowledged that a climate for making accommodations was in place when he took the job. He credits the school district's special education director and superintendent for having laid a solid foundation and for the way special education funding is handled. The funding issue is addressed later in this section, but here it is relevant as it is an administrative decision, or at least a Board of Education decision on the advice of the administration.

Likewise, the teachers expressed a great deal of respect and admiration for the administration, especially Mr. Bass. Mark's parents have a history of placement for Mark outside the district in spite of asking to have him attend his local school. They credit Mr. Bass as the administrator who was responsive to their concerns. He visited Mark in his segregated school setting, after which he opened the doors of NHS to their son. In fact, he assured Mark's parents that he could begin in a week if they so desired. That was last Spring and Mark's parents chose

to wait until Fall because of an impending surgery that would keep Mark out of school for most of the remaining school year.

Joan's enthusiastic response when discussing her relationship with the administration paints a clear picture:

It's wonderful! If I need anything or if I think the kids will want anything, or I think of something I need to use for my room or whatever, they jump. They get it. It's really nice. They are so supportive. I think one of the greatest feelings I've gotten from the school is--well this is my first year as a teacher. My background is not in special ed. It's in elementary ed, and I've had 9 hours of classes at Drake in the special ed department and they absolutely and completely trust me with these kids. They just, when they come down here it's to see how the kids are getting along with each other. It just feels so good. It really does.

The above citation and other data suggest another important staff characteristic--respect voiced and exhibited towards one another. Every teacher interviewed expressed admiration for the knowledge and skills of others working with Mark and Marie. The general education teachers refer to Joan and the paraprofessionals as "great." Eve, who initially expressed reservations about having a native speaker accompanying Mark, stated: "Actually, she's been a great, great addition, and I just love having her."

Flexibility is a major characteristic of the staff working with Mark and Marie. The paraprofessionals are responsive to the spontaneous changes or demands in their routines with Mark and Marie. They are both very quick to adapt to meet the needs and expectations of the faculty with respect to the students. Joan easily manipulates schedules and resources to allow for the least intrusion and maximum inclusion of these two students. The three general education teachers observed

demonstrated their tolerance and flexibility for adapting to unexpected interruptions in their teaching or in their plans.

Mark and Marie feel welcomed by the staff. This researcher observed several occasions and settings where the two students were warmly greeted. On one particular occasion as a student was being interviewed in an adjoining office, several teachers had gathered in the main office area. There was a hum of casual conversation interrupted by a male faculty member exclaiming, "Look who's rolling in!" This was followed in turn by warm greetings to Marie from all of the adults assembled there. Marie and her staff stayed just long enough for Marie, with coaching, to say, "Hi" and "Bye." As she left the office area, the conversation returned quite naturally to its previous hum.

Mark was asked if anyone ever talked to him in the halls. He responded with, "Bonjour," the greeting given him by the French I teacher daily. At another time he clearly stated, "Foods teacher" in response to a similar query.

The special education staff is viewed as dynamic and reaching out to all students by other staff and the parents. Eve credits Joan with being the primary facilitator and model.

I think it helps a lot that their regular teacher, Joan, she's a super outgoing gal and she makes a huge effort to get to know the other kids in the school, as well as just her couple. I have a lot of respect for her. I certainly could never, would never, would want to and couldn't do her job. It's so important that we have people special like her that can. I think other students see that she is just a really special dedicated person, not just dedicated to her own little program, but she's out in the hall, she communicates, she interacts with the other students, general ed students.

Eve had serious initial reservations about the imposed inclusion of Mark and Marie in her course. However, after four weeks her attitude



reflects none of her earlier misgivings. She confesses to trying more ways or approaches to teaching and finds their presence rewarding for her and the other students. Also evident is her growing understanding of them.

We don't all speak the same language and I think Mark has caught on to that really well. I don't know if Marie has caught on to it for sure or not; except that she really doesn't understand sometimes. She gets kind of frustrated when that happens, too. That's when she'll start talking more or saying more things just kind of out of context.

Eve ended her initial interview expressing a desire to do more.

"I do think too, that there's probably a million things that I could be doing that I'm not. That kind of makes me feel that I'm not doing my whole job."

Betty's initial response was that her department, "seems like a place that would make a natural connection." This natural acceptance of students like Mark and Marie in her Consumer and Family Science courses presumes the direct involvement of the special education staff and suggestions from them regarding curricular suggestions and modifications. She expressed no curiosity regarding them or personal awareness of their activities elsewhere in the building.

When asked for any further input regarding the characteristics present at NHS, Joan again touted the attitude of the general education staff:

I want to brag about the staff here because they are just wonderful. They are. Everybody is just excited to have them in their classes and you know they make sure they take time to stop and talk to the kids and they are really good. I think it's great. They don't baby them. They don't let them get away with doing things that they know better. So that's a good thing.

The staff at NHS is characterized by a high degree of respect and admiration for one another's roles and expertise. They are an enthusiastic staff which generally welcomes others and exhibits a great deal of flexibility. Their desire to do more has led to a growing understanding of themselves and the students with disabilities they teach. Joan and Mr. Bass are especially admired for their leadership in providing for the inclusion of Mark and Marie.

### Peer Responsiveness

The focus of this study intended to be the teachers' perspectives. However, it became readily apparent that the teachers take very seriously the attitude and perspective of the general education students in their own reactions to having students with severe cognitive disabilities in the classroom. Peer responsiveness to Mark and Marie is significant for their teachers as it provides a direct assessment of the targeted development of social skills. Joan stated:

The main thing is socialization. Mark and Marie when they graduate from high school will have to interact with these people. If including them is not going to be good for Mark and Marie they are not going to learn how to interact with others. The students are not going to learn how to interact with Mark and Marie. I think the benefits are probably more for the regular ed students than for Mark and Marie. I really do.

The tendency to determine the meaningfulness of school by the interactions of peers was echoed by Mark's parents. They referred to the importance of Mark gaining verbal skills from his peers and specifically noted the greetings given to him by general education students.

Each general education teacher voluntarily suggested the idea of interviewing a couple of general education students as a means of

getting a true sense of the characteristics present at NHS. Eve and Betty each arranged for students to take time from their respective classes to be interviewed. They selected the students and tried to get representation from differing perspectives. The teachers thought that peer responsiveness would be dependent on the age and experiences of the general education student.

The data collected from the students was remarkable in its simplicity. All four interviewees found it strange that anyone would be wanting to know about a phenomenon they perceived as natural. The freshman students conveyed the usualness of seeing Mark and Marie around. The junior female shared an accurate understanding of Marie that reflected at least some personal interactions with her. The senior male was removed from the concern: "Hey, it doesn't matter to me. You know, we each have our own thing to do. What they do, they do."

In response to the initial general probe, a freshman boy from French class began with:

Well really, having our students safe and caring about them. I notice them in the hall and say, "Hi", and people actually help them in class some times. When they are in class the teachers really interact with them. Not just staying with the other kids that are in there.

Clarifying question:

Are you talking about the general education teachers like your French teacher?

Student:

Yeah, they talk to them just as much as they do with us. Their help is great for them and I personally think some of their down thing is other students that (pause). In a word, putting them down in the community.

Probe:

Do you find that a lot?

Student:

Not as much as within, like people that are between them and, you know, like any one. Like one of us.

Probe:

Do you mean students who are less severely disabled?

Student:

Yeah. They need more attention and kinda get put down because they can't, well they just aren't as capable.

Later during the same interview, the student was redirected to the initial question concerning characteristics at NHS that facilitated inclusion. His response this time focused on the teaching methods used in the classroom.

In the classroom we kind of specialize in putting kids where (pause); along with other kids. All kinds of people are together. Kind of highly intelligent with lower, not necessarily mix them, but it like helps each other. Partners help each other. Partners learning. It really helps a lot.

Two general education students play especially significant roles in the inclusion of Mark and Marie. Emily is Marie's only sister. She is a well liked, responsible senior. Her stature among students and faculty alike and her acceptance of Marie lend to other's perception of Marie as a high school student. Becky, also a freshman, is Marie's special buddy. Becky first met Marie three years ago, and has developed a deepening understanding and friendship with her, which has broadened to include a larger group of peers with disabilities. She voluntarily spends at least one period each day with both Mark and Marie, but is obviously Marie's very best friend. Her genuine acceptance and enjoyment of their times together radiates to other general education students.

### Family Impact

The impact of Marie's sister, Emily, was clearly related. The interactions between these sisters at school model behaviors that are observed and sometimes emulated by other students. Mark is an only child.

Parents are an important element in the school life of any student, but especially for the student with exceptional needs as they are mandated members of the decision making teams. Mark and Marie have actively involved parents. Joan acknowledges the positive results that have transpired because of a healthy family and school partnership. Mark's parents refer to his inclusion as an "opportunity" and are very happy with his current placement.

Marie is in the unique position of having her father, Mr. Bass, as her high school principal. Mr. Bass was repeatedly credited for being the catalyst that facilitated the inclusion of Mark and Marie in this environment. Without exception this fact was mentioned by all of the adults interviewed. Further probing failed to elicit any further explanation. No attempt was made to explain the dynamics making this dual role so seemingly powerful. Mr. Bass stated, "and teachers, some that come in and say that my influence has a lot to do with that because I am a parent." He has had visitors from other schools tell him that this is a big contrast to the more common scenario of school administrators who delegate responsibility and discussion of special education to someone else.

## Resources

### Financial

Students in need of special education services draw down additional dollars to the district from the state. The severity of the student's disability determines the amount of money allocated. These dollars offset the extra cost of providing services and are referred to as weighted or indexed dollars. In the Newberg school system all of the indexed dollars are targeted to direct provision of services. This is an exception to the more common practice of allocating only those dollars above the standard tuition for the specific use of providing special education for the student. For example, if a student is indexed or weighted at 1.6, all 1.6 of those dollars follow the student rather than .6.

School finances are significant because this distribution of money is what allows the one-on-one paraprofessional and a reduced class size for Joan. They also explain why Joan readily receives materials, supplies, outings, and other cost-related requests from the office. Thus, fiscal resources are crucial to establishing and maintaining the NHS inclusive environment.

### Use of Time

Judicious use of time and time to use judiciously are key elements in this educational environment. With the support of the other faculty, Joan has the option of determining whether to spend time in the general education classroom or on a class outing. General education students, such as Becky, are given the time to spend with Mark and

Marie. General education teachers spend time interacting with these students in and out of the classroom. The administration takes time to visit the classrooms. Teachers who are a part of the collaborative teaching share mutual planning and teaching times.

The extra time needed to address Mark and Marie's basic bodily functions is scheduled into their daily routines. Joan has time to reflect, assess, plan, document, and participate in numerous non-traditional teaching activities, such as parent meetings and this study.

### Evolving Process

Many of the characteristics associated with the inclusion of students with severe cognitive disabilities in this high school environment are evolutionary. The dynamic between students with and without disabilities is an example. As Joan states:

It's kind of awkward right now because the other students don't know how to interact with Mark and Marie. They are rather separated and everything, but they are coming around. And you know they will run by them and say, "Hi." It's kind of neat because it used to be at the beginning of the year, this classroom was a quarantine or something. People just stayed away from it. I noticed second semester, it's usually just full. There are students coming in and interacting with them and it's just talking to them. I think they are starting to understand how good you feel when you work with kids like Mark and Marie.

Later Joan refers to this as a "natural process."

### Teachers' Roles

Teachers found defining their roles relative to the inclusion of Mark and Marie at Newberg High School challenging. The lines often blurred between current practice and future expectations. Triangulation

was especially valuable in addressing teachers' roles as a research question. Information from the interviews and documents did not always directly correlate with stated or observed practices. This section addresses the roles of teachers as facilitators and direct instructors which are recurrent themes in the research. Facilitators are those who provide more indirect teaching, often through modeling or enhancing the learning environment. Direct instructors are those who present and evaluate knowledge directly to the students. The frustrations expressed around the topic of teachers' roles are also shared.

With the support and advice of several people, Joan makes most of the decisions concerning Mark and Marie. Each student's goals and objectives were established by a team of professionals and the parents at an IEP staffing. Joan plays a major role as the leader of that team which meets at least annually. Daily activities surrounding Mark and Marie are overseen by her. Except for routine activities, other adults defer most decisions regarding Mark and Marie to Joan. She responds with action or advice. In her absence, the hierarchical locus of control dissipates as the paraprofessionals fluctuate between initiating actions and reacting to the actions of the other teachers.

Joan stressed to the other teachers and this researcher that the primary reason for including Mark and Marie is for socialization or the development of social skills. Her desire is for them to behave appropriately and respond to interactions of others in these settings. Knowledge or skill acquisition in the content area subject matter is secondary. Her goal is to acclimate them to natural peer settings while acclimating general education students to their presence. Such skills



are not readily transferable. Trying to teach them out of context is like teaching swimming without water. The approach at NHS is immersion. The high school teachers expressed an appreciation for this approach and the importance of knowing social skills.

### Teachers as Facilitators

The role of a facilitator is to make something easier for another person or group. In this study facilitation reflects the actions of teachers that make it easier for Mark and Marie to adjust to new environments, which is the first step in learning socially appropriate behaviors.

The general education teachers struggled to express their specific roles. They readily identified the roles of the paraprofessionals and Joan as the adults responsible for teaching and reinforcing social skills in an academic environment. Betty and Eve explained the nature of their content areas before arriving at their roles as facilitators by showing acceptance and modeling behaviors for other staff and students.

Eve expressed her efforts to make Marie feel welcomed.

Usually we are not on the same wave length. It's not the same conversation we are having with each other, but I go on to rub her back and hold her hand a little bit, just to let her know there is another person here who is glad that they are here.

A common theme emanating through word and action from all of the adults was that of modeling acceptance and socially appropriate behaviors for the other faculty and general education students. Eve replied:

In the school I think it's important that other faculty as well as other students see that I always approach them and say, "Hi"

to them when I see them in the hall. I hold the door for them when they are putting the wheelchairs through the door. I think as (pause). It's my job to model to other students as well as faculty members to model. It is really important that these kids feel like they are a part of this school and (pause). A way for us to do that is to make their life a little bit easier. I always sit by them at our school assemblies in the gym. I think it's important for the kids to see that. It's important to make an effort.

Betty modeled accepting behaviors as she greeted everyone entering her room with equal warmth. She then smoothly monitored everyone's activities, offering support and advice as needed.

#### Teachers as Providers of Direct Instruction

Joan identified and exhibited her responsibility for providing direct instruction to Mark and Marie. She strived to evaluate the learning environment, modified or created curriculum specific to meet the needs of each student, looked for ways to increase her knowledge and offered more creative options, and implemented various strategies as appropriate for the student.

One thinks of direct instruction as it applies to student learning. However, it also has implications for peer interactions. One of Joan's most pressing roles was to educate the other adults working with Mark and Marie. She provided them with direct instruction on issues ranging from knowledge about disabling conditions, to raising awareness about the capabilities of each student, to things as simple as operating the wheelchair safely. The general education faculty expressed an appreciation for her pragmatic suggestions. The paraprofessionals responded to her input with actions, and sought her approval for their own initiatives.

### Frustrations Voiced

The teachers in this study expressed frustration with identifying their roles as teachers. Eve stated:

My role, like I said is to teach them, or help them learn through interaction, more social skills and (pause) I don't know. It's important in just the general scope of thing that they realize. I don't know if they do, 'cause I don't understand a lot.

I just wish, I didn't have every day I didn't look at them and say, "Gosh, I really should have a different activity for them." Or I, I don't feel like I do inclusion to the extent that it could be done. I certainly don't think I do that. First I haven't been told or trained or in-serviced on how to do that, because who would have thought in French that I, I would have students like these?

Eve, the French teacher, is very content area focused. Her customary teaching role is the provision of direct instruction through lecture, demonstration, discussion or conversation, and monitoring students as they work in pairs practicing the language. Her room is arranged with the students seated in a double row, horseshoe configuration that facilitates her easy movement among the students. Mark and Marie and their accompanying paraprofessionals are seated at the base of the horseshoe. Maps, a demonstration table, and writing surface are directly across the room from them. The paraprofessionals gave needed verbal and physical cues to Mark and Marie throughout the class time. Eve directly addressed all students, including Mark and Marie, equitably. Her animated and enthusiastic approach appeared to be a natural consequence of her devotion to the language and culture of the French. The paraprofessional quietly repeated any queries and cues Mark and Marie for the correct response.

Joan expressed frustration about not having time to spend with any of the general education teachers, especially the French teacher, Eve. She explained plans of working in concert with the other teachers:

Query: Do you ever have time to plan with the French teacher, to talk about what is going to happen in class?

Joan: No, not really. I do that more with the PE and Foods teachers. In physical education, these kids got to get stretched every day. I don't want them to atrophy and things like that, so we get together and we talk about what is going to happen that week and things we can do. Of course Foods, we talk about what the unit is going to be and we haven't done this yet. We're going to start like maybe once every two weeks, the kids will plan a recipe. They will have to check the cupboards, and see if we have the food, and they, they will have to bring shopping lists and then we'll go to the store. The kids will actually shop for the food to get that experience and then we're going to make the food.

Betty, the Foods and Culinary Arts teacher, is also content area focused. Her common approaches to instruction include short lectures, frequent demonstrations, supervision, and guidance over the completion of individual or paired assignments, and lab monitoring. Her environment is divided into two very distinct areas--a more traditional classroom and a lab area of four kitchens. When Mark and Marie and their team are present, two separate learning groups exist. Each group has its own area. Betty's frustrations also centered on the desire to do more.

I don't know. It's so hard. Like especially with Marie. What is she capable of understanding? The communication is not there. I just think it's beneficial to be in a room with people. That's kind of the main objective.

Then there is another part of me, the other voice that's saying, "We should be helping these kids achieve even more." And I don't know how much is more.

#### Identifying Progress

Betty's internal struggle was typical of the other teachers at NHS who teach Mark and Marie. There was, however, a recognition of

progress on their part by all three teachers. Betty stated: "We're learning as we go, too." This simple statement recognized a growing understanding by the teachers of the students with disabilities and the teachers' roles in inclusion.

The students with disabilities are demonstrating progress to the general education teachers. Regarding Marie, Betty said:

She called me Karen the first semester because my voice is similar to an aide she had worked with before. My first name is Betty. So we now have her saying Bet. So that's kind of neat. That's progress. What more should I expect? I don't know.

Eve explained that initially Mark's sudden outbursts of "Not" and "Psyche" would elicit inappropriate responses from other students. Now they are more inclined to ignore him and go on with their own work. The general education students learning how to respond to Mark's outbursts in the classrooms provides an example of their progress.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

*"Each and every educator must strive to be an effective change agent"* (Fullan, 1993, p. 13).

This chapter presents a summary of the research approach, identifies limitations inherent in this particular single case ethnographic investigation, draws certain conclusions, infers implications, offers recommendations for the site, and directions for future studies.

#### Summary

This research investigated the inclusion of high school students with severe cognitive disabilities from the teacher's perspective. It began with developing a clearer understanding of the terms, examining the historical foundation, and raising issues specific to a high school setting. Two questions evolved:

1. What are the characteristics present and to what degree in a high school inclusionary environment?
2. What are the roles of the special education and general education teachers in an inclusionary environment?

The literature posited several research based characteristics common to the successful implementation of inclusive education. These factors are; visionary leadership, collaboration, refocused use of

assessment, supports for staff and students, funding, parent involvement, classroom models and effective teaching practices, systemic transition planning process, and building and opportunities accessible to all (Burnette, 1996; Cole & McLeskey, 1997; King-Sears, 1997; Rogers, 1993; Thousand & Villa, 1995).

A voluntary site with two freshmen, a male and a female, with severe cognitive disabilities was studied to identify the characteristics present and the roles of the teachers. The initial orientation discovered a safe, friendly, student-centered academic environment. Descriptions of the situation were developed from observations, interviews, document analysis, and journaling. This study sought to capture teachers' voices in a school rich with the sense of student. Interviews with the administrator, parents, and teachers led to unanticipated interviews with students as, for these teachers, self-perceptions are in large part reflected in student voices. Member checks were conducted throughout the investigation. Every effort was made to maintain accurate documentation and collect thick, rich descriptive information unblurred by extraneous variables.

The NHS staff perceive themselves as leaders in the inclusion of students with disabilities. Strong statements in support of providing education for all students permeate their public documents and discussions. The normalcy of having students with special needs in their environment is validated by reactions from several general education students. School administration has established a climate for making accommodations and directing funding towards meeting student needs.

The special education teacher maintains a self-contained classroom with integration. This implies that students spend some time in a unique educational setting and some time in settings common to general education students. Such was the case with the two students at the center of this study. Their schedules and activities follow those of other high school students with some course work addressed in general education classrooms and some in the special education room. The two of them have very similar schedules, and are included in the same general education classes at the same times. These classes are Physical Education, Foods, and French I. Each student has an adult, usually a paraprofessional, providing one-on-one support at all times.

The focus of this study was primarily on three teachers who each spend time daily with the two students. Their special education teacher was the primary decision maker regarding their education. Research also centered on the Foods teacher and French teacher. Each teacher in this study exhibited unique approaches to inclusive education. The Foods teacher provided space, materials, and advice. Two groups, one composed of students receiving special education services and the other an assemblage of general education students, met simultaneously in two different parts of the room. She expressed and demonstrated more indirect instruction about the two identified students, as she provided supports to the special education staff and modeled appropriate behaviors to her general education students. The French teacher also modeled social and academic behaviors, however, in this setting the identified students and their paraprofessionals were seated among the other students. She provided instruction directly to all the students



including those with special needs and sought responses from them. Teaching transpired in isolated settings, in parallel instructional environments, and to a blended class, all under the precept of inclusion. Instruction was both direct and indirect. Determination of which classes would be inclusive was made exclusive of input from the general education classroom teachers. Placement was clearly defined as being for social skills only.

Several characteristics emerged as common themes relative to the school, the staff, the students, and the families. This school has a commitment to and strong administrative support for inclusion. Physical accommodations were readily made and curricular modifications were commonplace. The staff exhibited serious concern for the attitudes and achievement of all students and held high regard for one another and the administration. They saw themselves as being strong proponents and in fact, leaders in the movement towards inclusion. Several staff members taught collaboratively. The staff felt supported, supportive, and respected. They were flexible, welcoming, and appreciative of the dynamic personality of the special education teacher. There were some frustrations resulting primarily from concerns about what to do. The staff valued highly the perceptions of the students.

The students at NHS accepted as natural the placement and participation of students with disabilities in their school. The families encountered in this study are active, concerned, and cooperative without being interfering.

Perhaps because of the school's strong commitment to the philosophy on inclusion, financial resources were not considered an

issue. The resource of most concern was time. Teachers recognized inclusion as an evolving process.

### Limitations

The data for this study were generated from a single, voluntary high school environment. The very nature of this single case, descriptive, ethnographic study negates statistical generalizability. Moreover, the purpose of this study was not to test a hypothesis, but to discover through purposeful qualitative research, what characteristics and roles were present in a high school inclusionary setting.

Cole and McLeskey (1997) determined that each situation is unique and "each secondary program should be tailored to the specific needs of a given setting (p. 3)." The nature of individualized instruction to meet the needs of students with learning problems is necessarily unique to each situation and therefore accents this limitation. The definition of success for each particular student may have some characteristics common to other students; however when defined from the student's unique perspective, the meaning of success will necessarily be singular.

Newberg is a suburban community. There is a different sense of community here as the number of businesses is small, and discussion of community outings means a trip to the nearest mall in the neighboring metropolitan area. Yet inside the walls of the high school a sense of community exists. The high school is part of a school system with a commitment to the philosophy of inclusion. The sense of combined friendliness, teamwork, compassion, and acceptance prevails. Students and faculty alike move comfortably throughout the building. The high

school presents a safe, nurturing environment built upon mutual teacher and student trust and respect. Many would consider this an ideal educational environment for the inclusion of students with severe cognitive disabilities, and thus perhaps atypical of many other high schools.

An important limitation in this study is the dual role of the principal as the father of one of the included students. His job and his personal life are intimately intertwined. His commitments to his daughter and to education are premised on an abiding faith in the tenets of individual validity, the promise of inclusion, and a leadership style which encourages decision making and responsibility on the part of the staff. He values the importance of student-focused decision making and believes that special education is a service or support rather than a place or location. His position facilitated the presence of both of these students in the high school, deemphasizes the self-contained classroom approach to service provision, and lends strong support to the special education teacher as she works with others towards their inclusion in the regular curriculum. He participates in his daughter's IEP that determines goals and objectives and then gives the teachers the responsibility for the implementation of her specific educational programming. He was not involved in the details of her day-to-day education beyond what would be expected of an administrator or parent.

The similarities of the three key teachers studied are important considerations. All are women. This is the first year at NHS for all three, yet not anyone's first year in education. Only the special education teacher has experience with inclusion.

The parents in this study share commonalties which are not necessarily typical. Each student lives in the family home with both of his or her parents. Neither set of parents represents any racial, ethnic, or cultural minority groups. None live in poverty. All four parents are in complete support of the school and work cooperatively with the school personnel.

### Conclusions and Implications

It is the intent of this study to emphasize teachers' voices because the focus is from their perspective. Every effort was made to accurately report the opinions and views from general educators as well as the special education teacher. Other members of the staffing team provide insights and add to the breadth of data specifically related to the characteristics present in the educational environment. Information specific to the students with special educational needs provides context. The conclusion and implications however, are drawn primarily from the teachers' perspectives.

This study rested upon four clearly defined premises. These premises parallel the attitude and activities at NHS as well. They were:

1. All children can learn.
2. Education is the right of all children.
3. Each students' strengths, needs, experiences, and perceptions must be considered in reflecting on educational approaches.
4. Change is a part of life.

Inherent in this discussion of inclusion is the recognition that inclusion is a process (Ferguson, 1995) which is provided in a typical

school setting (Association for Retarded Citizens, 1992). It reflects an approach to education that identifies the general education classroom as the first alternative for all children. Inclusion is a very individualized approach to meeting the educational needs of students with cognitive disabilities that affects the larger school community.

This section compares and synthesizes prior investigations with the analyses and interpretations inferred from the data in this study. It first addresses visionary leadership and collaboration, two themes which emerged from this research which were evidenced as well in previous studies. NHS holds the promise of developing educational plans that are rich and meaningful for all of its teachers and students. As it continues the process of including students with severe cognitive disabilities into the general education curriculum, the evolutionary nature of such an effort demands an understanding of the dynamics of change as applied to an educational setting. This becomes evident especially as the factors of visionary leadership and collaboration are addressed.

A composite from Burnette (1996), Cole and McLeskey (1997), King-Sears (1997), Rogers (1993), and Thousand and Villa (1995) also identified other common characteristics as: refocused use of assessment, supports for staff and students, funding, effective parent involvement, classroom models and effective teaching practices, systemic transition planning process, and building and opportunities accessible to all. These other common characteristics are discussed as well. These theoretical conclusions are not intended to be generalizable but rather serve as working hypotheses relative to the site studied.

### Visionary Leadership

Visionary leadership is based on positive views regarding students' ability to learn, teachers' skill in teaching, and the mutual benefits of inclusionary practices. It welcomes positive change and demands high degrees of trust, respect, and flexibility (King-Sears, 1997). Imbedded in policy and practice is the commitment to maintain a caring community focused on a shared vision (Sashkin, 1995). Such leadership was evidenced at NHS. Faculty and students exhibited flexibility, for example, as they found time within their schedules to be interviewed. They adapted to field trips, snow days, and academic testing days when students with special needs were not in the general education classrooms. They trusted that this study and this investigator's presence were not interruptions nor intrusions, but rather worthwhile activities with the potential to enhance their learning environment.

In some regards each teacher was a leader in her own right. Each took the initiative to act or suggest behavior such as arranging time from their respective courses for the student interviews and welcoming observations of their joint actions. Cole and McLeskey (1997) address the importance of teachers knowing that their administrators will provide the necessary support as the teachers work together.

The special education teacher and principal stand out, however, as the forces behind the inclusion of the two students. Fullan (1993) states, "Moral purpose needs an engine, and the engine is individual, skilled change agents pushing for changes around them, intersecting with other like minded individuals and groups to form the critical mass

necessary to bring about continuous improvements" (p. 40). Mr. Bass and Joan are the engines at Newberg High School.

It is apparent that the administration proceeded on assumptions established with the successful inclusion of students with mild disabilities. What transpired at NHS has a top-down flavor and runs counter to Fullan's premise that change cannot be mandated (1993). Given the concerns expressed by the general education teachers, what appears as administrative assumptions, and Fullan's premise, apprehension arises over the long-term ramifications and possibilities for balkinization among those in the school who teach collaboratively. "Balkanization occurs when strong loyalties form within a group with a resultant indifference or even hostility to other groups" (Fullan, 1993, p. 83). Specifically, one of the general educators studied borders on indifference as she seems content with the status quo and claims no desire for further information about or involvement in the decision making concerning the students. Her attitude is one that distances her from meaningful interaction. The other general education teacher has expressed serious frustrations about her inability to be more helpful. Left unresolved, this frustration could readily convert to hostility.

### Collaboration

Collaboration in this study refers to the cooperative efforts of the staff in order to meet the educational needs of the students. Researchers consistently target the importance of a shared responsibility and commitment to a mutual goal or vision which transcends individual interests (Hillman et al., 1994; Pugach & Johnson, 1995). Furthermore, it is a voluntary effort based again on trust and

respect. These characteristics blend with the visionary leadership previously discussed. If these characteristics are present at NHS, then the benefits of collaborative efforts should also be present. Researchers cite six common benefits resulting from collaborative efforts. They are: improved learning for all, increased planning, stimulates new ideas (innovation), breaks isolation/provides emotional support, empowerment, and adaptability and reliability (Hillman et al., 1994; Inger, 1996; McIntosh & Shipman, 1996; Pugach & Johnson, 1995). Teachers in this study discussed the increased learning for themselves, other teachers, general education and special education students. Increased planning at this time is more incidental than intentional and is an area addressed with frustration by all three key teachers. As the NHS teachers learn more about the students with special needs, approaches to instruction and modifications, and the cooperative possibilities with multiple adults in the classroom simultaneously, they are beginning to create new ideas. They have yet to fully experience or comprehend the potential benefits of peer emotional support, self-empowerment, or issues related to adaptability and reliability. Staff still rely heavily on the special education teacher's advice rather than mutual decision making. This must be recognized as a serious barrier to growth.

Fullan (1993) stresses the need for teachers to work cooperatively if they are to be a part of dynamic, productive organizational change. He shares seven interlocking components to describe the work of the teacher. Briefly, they are: a commitment to moral purpose, a deepened knowledge of pedagogy, a cognizance of the



link between moral purpose and societal development, new structures for their work that breaks the autonomy of the traditional classroom, development of the habits and skills of continuous inquiry and learning, and an immersion in the dynamic complexity in the change process (pp. 80-81). NHS is beginning to work cooperatively. Recognizing communication as the cornerstone of collaboration (Pugach & Johnson, 1995) may help NHS realize their powerful potential for creating a meaningful educational environment for staff and students, including those with significant learning challenges.

#### Other Characteristics

Refocused use of assessment, supports for staff and students, funding, effective parent involvement, classroom models and effective teaching practices, systemic transition planning process, and building and opportunities accessible to all are other characteristics considered important in an inclusive environment. Neither student nor program assessment issues were observed or discussed at NHS. That is not to say that they are not in place, but rather that assessment warrants consideration and discussion. Fullan (1993) states, "Effective change agents neither embrace nor ignore mandates. They use them as catalysts to reexamine what they are doing" (p. 24).

Supports for staff and students range from avoiding the overloading of classrooms with students with disabilities (Cole & McLeskey, 1997), providing for systemic staff development (King-Sears, 1997), flexible planning time that allows for teachers to spend time with their colleagues (Cole & McLeskey, 1997), and the infusion of technology (Higgins & Boone, 1993; Woodward & Carnine, 1993). This

researcher observed a balance of students with special needs and general education students in each of the inclusive environments. Marie and Mark were 2 of 21 in French I and 2 of 18 in physical education. The Foods I class was a more parallel teaching and learning environment with relatively limited interaction. In this situation Mark and Marie were part of a trio of students with special needs in one area of the room while 6 general education students were in another part of this same classroom. Staff development opportunities and the infusion of technology were not immediately apparent. The three teachers all expressed a desire for more time to plan together. An interesting observation regarding planning time was made, however. The special education teacher discussed shared planning with the Foods teacher, yet this is the parallel environment reflecting little inclusion beyond shared space. At the same time she states that she does not have time to plan with the French teacher, an environment where the teacher is directly interacting with the two students with special needs.

The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion [NCERI] (1998) discusses funding as it impacts student placement and inclusion, emphasizing the importance of having funding which follows the student with special needs. Fiscal resources are crucial to establishing and maintaining the NHS inclusive environment. The additional dollars received by the district because of the severity of the student's disability are used to offset the extra cost of providing services. In the Newberg school system, all of the indexed dollars are targeted to direct provision of services including the provision of the

one-on-one paraprofessional and a reduced class size for the special education teacher, Joan. Thus the dollars do follow the student at NHS.

Legislation and research such as NCERI (1998) recognize the positive contribution that a working partnership with parents makes for the education of all children, but especially for children with disabilities. This study focused around two students whose parents are active, willing, positive participants in their children's education.

Numerous researchers discuss the importance of variety, flexibility, and the need for classroom models and teaching strategies to fit the unique educational needs of a given setting (Cole & McLeskey, 1997; King-Sears, 1997). This study found students with special needs actively participating in a variety of educational settings. Teaching and learning take place in a self-contained classroom, a classroom with a more parallel instructional approach, two classrooms where the students with special needs are infused with general education students, and informal educational environments which are important to the attainment of specific individual goals. Such variety holds the potential for affording maximum student achievement.

No evidence was presented or discussion offered to this investigator regarding transition plans for the two students. A systemic transition planning process is a recognized element in the success of inclusion for high school students with special learning needs. It addresses issues of concern as students move from the academic world into adult life. Such a process requires an emphasis on vocational assessment and skill's acquisition resulting in realignment of prioritized goals and objectives. This could hold serious implications

for the singly focused goal of socialization credited as the incentive for inclusion at NHS. This discussion is by law a responsibility of the IEP team. The members of the team then accept responsibility for accomplishing the goals and objectives set forth by the team. Addressing transition is more than a legal issue as it aims at the heart of education, which is preparation for adulthood. Specific transitional goals and objectives were not a part of either students' IEP.

Physical accommodations and curricular modifications as characteristics evidenced at NHS support other research that has identified the need to have buildings and opportunities accessible to all. Both are issues commanding ongoing assessment.

#### Teachers' Roles

The teachers in this study used differing teaching methods. This may be related to the content area, the teacher training programs, the philosophical base behind the approach, the experiences and/or personality of the teacher, or any number of variables. What became apparent is the importance of avoiding the tendency to overgeneralize the perceptions of teachers simply because they are general education or special education faculty. The initial responses from the teachers studied gave a sense of unified direction. However, the ensuing interviews and observations revealed very different manifestations of inclusion and their respective roles in its implementation.

This research provided an opportunity for the participants to consider what they are already doing, how they arrived at this point, and what they would like to see happening. The more serious these

teachers became as they talked about their role in the inclusion of the two students with special needs, the more they expressed frustrations regarding the unknown. Responses became inquiries and statements that targeted discomfort with the unknown. The general education teachers especially expressed feelings of insecurity regarding their respective roles as teachers. While initially uncomfortable for them, such reflections should be encouraged if meaningful change is to result.

Fullan (1993) found:

The more accustomed one becomes at dealing with the unknown, the more one understands that creative breakthroughs are always preceded by periods of cloudy thinking, confusion, exploration, trial and stress; followed by periods of excitement, and growing confidence as one pursues purposeful change, or copes with unwanted change. (p. 17)

The special education teacher simply placed the students with severe cognitive disabilities in the learning environments at the onset. Such a practice contradicts the preponderance of research that insists that careful collaborative planning and well-defined objectives are minimally required before placing students in an inclusive environment. Yet Fullan (1993) states, "People must behave their way into new ideas and skill, not just think their way into them" (p. 15). Joan merely wanted the students physically in the classrooms and anticipated garnering involvement from there. The teachers have overcome the initial adaptations and are slipping into patterns of indifference or frustration. If the integrity of the effort is to be maintained, it is time to move beyond simple presence.

This study strove to more clearly define the changing role of the special education teacher. The autonomy of the self-contained classroom that had historically allowed the special education teacher extensive

flexibility regarding curriculum design and adaptation appears to have simply relocated itself. Relationships and responsibilities have not changed significantly from the self-contained setting, and in this regard one gets the sense of separation with a common environment. These need to be redefined if further growth is to be experienced.

The special education teacher has clearly attempted to be included as a recognized member of the NHS faculty. Her efforts to reach out to other students and thus become a visible, supportive, viable part of the team of teachers is an important step in creating the perception that special education is an integral part of education and not a subset of it. Students, faculty, and staff acceptance of her moves everyone much closer to the acceptance of her students. It also highlights the importance of the character, philosophy, disposition, and even personality of the special educator.

#### Other Conclusions and Implications

Newberg High School has an accepting attitude. There is a strong sense of mutual belonging. This was especially evidenced in the events that transpired in the office area and then again highlighted in the student interviews. When asked about having the two targeted students in class with her, the young female's response of, "They make us smile" is revealing. It is far removed from the anticipated, "They make me thankful for what I have and can do" stereotypical response. Other students said that it was "Good" or "OK" for them to be in class. Their presence is no longer viewed as exceptional. People here have the capacity to accept others seemingly unconditionally. Such a posture is

admirable. Acceptance does not just suddenly happen. It evolves over time. As a changing condition it has the potential to focus on helping each individual grow towards his or her own potential or become apathetic. Meaningful, enthusiastic participation may be the catalyst that makes the difference.

The history of special education reform and any discussion of legislation or its implications for NHS did not surface during this study. The impression is that teachers are complying with their perceptions of what is expected without awareness of policies such as that of providing education in the least restrictive environment. Although more directed inquiry could reveal the knowledge base of the faculty and staff regarding the law, a larger question surrounds its implementation and the differing perceptions between policy and practice among the research participants.

The unresolved issues surrounding the initial placement decisions and approaches are in part responsible for the frustrations expressed by the general education teachers. One gets the sense that the general education teachers were recruited for a team they may not mind playing on, but they don't know the rules. The lack of clarity of expectations fuels the frustration.

The unrestricted willingness of participants to dedicate time from their full schedules to provide input into this research is revealing. It would presume that the issue of inclusion needs to be revisited. It also highlights people's acceptance of time limited commitments, especially to those activities with the promise of efficacy.

The quest to obtain teacher's opinions and perceptions of the environmental characteristics and their roles as teachers led to unanticipated student interviews. Teachers place a very high value on student perspectives. When a student shows or expresses competence, teachers feel good for them and about themselves. Students who do well and feel well are reinforcing for their teachers. There is a positive correlation between student success and a teacher's sense of efficacy. These same teachers are now being asked to work with students who exhibit success differently. It is natural for them to be questioning their own relevancy. Some means of reinforcement must be evidenced.

Generally, the characteristics present in this school confirm and strengthen previous research on the characteristics of an inclusive environment. It is important to recognize them as dynamic elements in education, thus subject to change. It is also important for a school dedicated to providing quality educational opportunities for all students to persistently address the establishment, maintenance, and evaluation of positive environmental characteristics.

#### Recommendations for the Site

Efforts to include students with severe cognitive disabilities at Newberg High School have highlighted both the school's strengths and its needs. The search for environmental characteristics and role definitions for teachers raised issues not mutually exclusive of one another. NHS's reputation as a leader in the area for including persons with special educational needs is valid. These strengths can readily provide the



impetus and foundation for moving forward. Change is an intimate part of education and is a premise for these recommendations.

The cooperative philosophy of this academic environment permeated this study. NHS has only to look to itself for solution. It recognizes a perpetual state of change. There is an influx of new students, including those with special education needs, which is creating a rapidly increasing enrollment. A new addition to the physical structure is nearing completion. Because it is not overwhelmed by the chaos created, NHS offers fertile soil for change. Fullan (1993) shares emerging patterns indicative of schools which promise to contribute to individual and societal development. They are:

First, because the best pedagogical solutions remain to be developed and worked out, and because these solutions are ever complex and diverse according to different situation, the task is formidable.

Second, because post-modern society is dynamically complex and highly political, the change process, however well planned, will be fraught with unpredictable and uncontrollable problems and opportunities which in turn will generate scores of ramifications. Educational change is inevitably non-linear and unending.

Third, under these conditions having a sense of moral purpose and vision can be a decided advantage, but clarity of purpose can also be a liability if the vision is rigid and/or wrong, and if the process of vision-building does not result in a shared sense of purpose.

Fourth, the individual and group must co-exist in dynamic tension. No situation based either on widespread individual autonomy or on group consensus will be functional. There must be a constant give and take between the individual and the group.

Fifth, because the task is overwhelming, and because different constituencies all see themselves as having a stake in the outcomes, the capacity to enter partnerships and form alliances is essential.

Sixth, for all these reasons conflict and disagreement will plague the process, especially at the early stages of working on a problem.

Seventh, it follows that a spirit of inquiry and continuous learning must characterize the whole enterprise, or else all is lost. (pp. 66-67)

Curricular modifications must be addressed. NHS needs to move toward shared responsibility. There is a high potential for success given the experience of other educators in the building, the strong administrative support, and the desire of the general educators to do more. Other teams of teachers are collaboratively providing direct instruction and examples abound from them of co-teaching and mutually developed and facilitated accommodations.

Physical accommodations specific to the needs of the students will need continued monitoring. One noted in this research is the lack of accessibility to the stove, counters, and sink in the home economics room.

There was no discussion regarding the historical foundation and philosophies behind inclusion. Further inquiry is necessary to determine what level of understanding exists regarding the intent of the legislation and its current requirements. Are the practices undertaken done so in isolation of the policies or philosophies? Is there more concern over the letter of the law or its intent?

Teachers need to develop and maintain a sense of personal worthiness. The teachers in this study rely heavily on student comments. Broader avenues of self-evaluation should be explored.

Newberg High School is moving towards the perception of special education as a part of education rather than something running as a subset or parallel to it. York and Reynolds (1996) discuss, for example, the knowledge universally needed by all educators. They offer insights into the expansion of a knowledge base which recognizes contextual circumstance and individual variations. Such resources could be

beneficial to NHS as it continues in its current direction. The school designs common planning time for the teachers when possible, and provides substitutes twice monthly for peer development and collaborative planning. These opportunities could be extended to those working with students with severe cognitive disabilities. The common knowledge base is a logical first step towards shared decision making.

Suggestions for NHS leadership center around the review of common characteristics of inclusion presented in the introduction to this study. Questions that would initiate serious discussions might be:

How actively do students with severe cognitive disabilities participate in general education classrooms and activities for both educational and social opportunities?

Are students with disabilities dispersed throughout the system?

Are they following a schedule that parallels their peers?

Who attends staffings and why?

Are concepts relevant to inclusion incorporated in the student's individualized educational plan(IEP)?

What parts do the general education and special education teachers have in the development and delivery of the goals and objectives on a student's IEP?

Is the special education teacher working as team member serving students with and without disabilities together?

Are the support services brought to the students and the teachers in the natural high school environment?

What supports are available to the teachers? What modifications for them? Preliminary skill training and follow-up intervention and/or further training?

What are the student expectations?

Are faculty members using innovative and proven teaching strategies, programs, methods, and materials for a variety of learning styles?

Do these facilitate higher order thinking skills?

What is and can be done in the area of assessment?

What are the transition plans?

This study was by its nature bounded in time, place, and the involvement of specific people. A follow-up study of Newberg High School could uncover what happens over time or when another factor changes; for instance, a different content area, new administration, different students and parents. What differences or similarities would be revealed with the implementation of some of the preceding recommendations specifically towards NHS promise?

#### Directions for Future Studies

While the findings of this single case ethnographic case study deny generalizability, they do lend suggestions for research beyond this site. Those are discussed in this final section.

Replicating this study in contrasting environments could provide interesting comparisons to the characteristics identified at NHS. How does the ambiance of a small rural community impact its school's

approach to the inclusion of students with special needs? The large urban school offers yet another perspective.

A closer examination of ways to provide services in an inclusive environment is needed. One approach that surfaced in this study was the provision of an adult to accompany the student with special needs at all times. This one-on-one method is highly valued by the parents and teachers under the presumption that it is an ideal educational strategy for students with severe physical and cognitive needs. As students move into the general curriculum and out of isolated educational settings, is this appropriate? Under what circumstances is it an asset or a liability? What are some creative and viable alternatives? When does one-on-one become a barrier? How long can it be justified as financially feasible?

The goal of the students in this study was on socialization. The mandate is to address transition from school to adult life that includes vocational, residential, and social skills. Students' Individual Education Programs (IEPs) must have a transition component which clearly delineates what services are to be provided, who will be providing them, how and when these services will transpire. The value of smoothing the transition from school to work was clearly reiterated in IDEA '97 (Association for Retarded Citizens, 1997) as the age of initial planning was moved from age 16 to age 14. Job skills, exploration, and employability have historically been the focus of secondary special education self-contained classrooms. Effective means of addressing these seemingly dichotomous priorities in an inclusive environment need to be

identified. The roles of teachers and essential environmental characteristics have yet to be addressed.

Follow-up studies may examine the effects or justification for inclusion on the basis of social skills development. What attitudes and behaviors do graduates, now part of the adult world hold as a result of inclusion? This is important for both general education and special education. How are the students with cognitive disabilities fitting in to adult society or adult services? Where are the friendships after graduation?

A critical factor in the initial legislation providing for services to students with special needs was the incorporation of a funding stream with the mandate for services. These supplemental dollars have traditionally been tracked separate from the general education budget. As the lines of service and responsibilities for students' blur, issues of financial accountability become unclear. It becomes more difficult to track the explicit expenditure of designated dollars. The need for the continued separation of funding streams and methods of accountability need to be reevaluated.

The difficulty teachers had in identifying their roles and their subsequent reliance on student impressions as a means of evaluating their own worthiness opens an extensive area for further research. Issues of teacher validity extend well beyond the scope of this study and reach into the realms of teacher preparation, teacher compensation, and professional philosophies. The work of a teacher does not result in a commodity with a specific dollar and cents or numeric method of accountability. Teachers have traditionally valued their profession's

ability to develop literate, contributing future citizens and take special pride in those former students who have excelled as adults. Introducing a new population of students with very different potentials and unique ways of communicating their impressions creates a very real challenge to the traditional approach. What impact does this have on teachers' sense of self-efficacy?

The influence of methodologies and approaches such as school within a school, interdisciplinary instruction at the high schools, and block scheduling were not addressed in this study. Each of these holds implications for the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities. Research surrounding methodologies and approaches needs to consider the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities as part of the general education population.

Inclusion is yet to be seen as a part of education, but rather as a part of special education. The challenge of how to go beyond the idea that it is another special education initiative and yet maintain the value of specialized supports and services needs to be solved. The corresponding responsibilities and roles of the special education teacher MUST be more clearly examined. It may prove dangerous to expect them to serve their old roles in new environments.

Education is experiencing a rapid growth in new ideas and approaches. New directions in technology, discoveries regarding brain-based learning and intelligences (Gardner, 1993) and the constructivistic approach to education are examples of exciting areas for further research specifically as they apply to inclusive educational environments.

In conclusion, this ethnographic case study described the characteristics present in a high school inclusionary environment especially as they related to the roles of the teachers. The themes which emerged from the data were generally consistent with the research, however they were manifested in ways unique to the NHS environment. It is not the intent of this research or this researcher to predict implications for other educational settings, but rather to present dependable information which is useful to the site under study. It is hoped that this study of the inclusion of students with severe cognitive disabilities in a high school environment will become part of a larger body of knowledge from which the reader may gain insights for his or her specific situation.



## REFERENCES

- American Association on Mental Retardation. (1997). Mental retardation: Definition, classification, and systems of supports (9th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Association for Retarded Citizens. (1992). Report card to the nation on inclusion in education of students with mental retardation. Arlington, Texas.
- Association for Retarded Citizens. (1997, December). IDEA '97 (On-line). Available: <http://www.arcus.org>.
- Bauwens, J., Ehler, B. J., Hourcade, J. J., & Schrag, J. (1997). Barriers to implementing collaboration. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Board of Educational Examiners. (1997, August). Requirements for special education endorsements (On-line). Available: <http://www.state.ia.us/educate/depteduc/elsecd/praclic/license/speced.html>.
- Bruder, M. B. (1997). Inclusion for infants, toddlers and preschoolers: Participation in natural environments. NCERI: National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion Bulletin 1.1. The Graduate School and University Center, The City University of New York.
- Burnette, J. (1996). Including students with disabilities in general education classrooms: From policy to practice. The ERIC Review, 4(3), 2-11.
- Cole, C. (1995). A contextualized understanding of teachers' practice, their collaborative relationships, and the inclusion of students with disabilities. Unpublished doctoral dissertation (AAC9601781), Indiana University, Bloomington.
- Cole, C. M., & McLeskey, J. (1997). Secondary inclusion programs for students with mild disabilities. Focus on Exceptional Children, 29(6), 1-15.
- Council for Exceptional Children. (1992, April). Academy for professional collaboration: Overview. San Diego, CA.
- Council for Exceptional Children. (1997, November). The new IDEA (On-line). Available: <http://www.cec.org>.
- Ducharme, M. K., Licklider, B. L., Matthes, W. A., & Vannatta, R. A. (1995). Conceptual and analysis criteria: A process for identifying quality educational research. Des Moines, IA: FINE Foundation.

- Dunn, L. M. (1968). Special education for the mildly retarded: Is much of it justifiable? Exceptional Children, 34, 5-22.
- Ferguson, D. L. (1995, December). The real challenge of inclusion: Confessions of a "rabid inclusionist." Phi Delta Kappan, 77, 281-287.
- Friend, M., & Bursack, W. (1996). Including students with special needs: A practical guide for classroom teachers. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (1994-1995). Sometimes separate is better. Educational Leadership, 52(4), 22-26.
- Fuchs, L. S., Fuchs, D., & Hamlett, C. L. (1993). Technology advances linking the assessment of students' academic proficiency to instructional planning. Journal of Special Education Technology, 12(1), 49-62.
- Fullan, M. (1993). Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform. Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.
- Gardner, H. (1993). Creating minds. New York: Basic Books.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction. New York: Longman.
- Hall, G., & Hord, S. L. (1987). Change in schools. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hallahan, D. P., & Kauffman, J. M. (1997). Exceptional learners: Introduction to special education (7th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hayden, M., Gersten, R., & Carnine, D. (1992). Using computer networking to increase active teaching in general education math classes containing students with mild disabilities. Journal of Special Education Technology, 12, 167-177.
- Higgins, K., & Boone, R. (1993). Technology as a tutor, tool, and agent for reading. Journal of Special Education Technology, 12(1), 28-37.
- Hillman, S. A., Panyan, M. V., & Dykstra, K. (1994, November). The preparation of general and special educators for collaboration. Presentation at the Seventeenth Annual TED Conference, San Diego, California.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (the "IDEA"). 20 U.S.C. sec. 1400 *et seq.* (1997).

- Inger, M. (1996, July). Teacher collaboration in secondary schools (Online). Available: <http://vocserve.berkeley.edu/centerfocus/CF2.html>.
- Iowa Protection and Advocacy. (1997). Are you ready for a new IDEA? News, Fall '97, 1-2.
- King-Sears, M. E. (1997). Best academic practices for inclusive classrooms. Focus on Exceptional Children, 29(7), 1-22.
- Lieberman, A. (1986). Collaborative work. In Hillman, S. A., Panyan, M. V., & Dykstra, K. (1994, November). The preparation of general and special educators for collaboration. Presentation at the Seventeenth Annual TED Conference, San Diego, CA.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Maheady, L., Harper, G. F., & Pomerantz, D. (1997). Peer-mediated instruction: A viable set of instructional options for classroom teachers in the 21st century. Paper presented for the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children Conference, Savannah, GA.
- McIntosh, W. J., & Shipman, H. (1996, March/April). The power of collaboration. Journal of Colleges of Science Teachers, 25, 364-365.
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary. (9th ed.). (1983). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.
- The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI). (1998). National study of inclusive education (2nd ed). The City University of New York, The Graduate School and University Center, New York, NY.
- New technologies/Applications for special education. (1996, August). CEC Today 3.2, 1-5.
- Olson, J. L., & Platt, J. M. (1996). Teaching children and adolescents with special needs (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Pugach, N. C., & Johnson, L. J. (1995). Collaborative practitioners, collaborative schools. Denver, CO: Love.
- Rogers, J. (1993). The inclusion revolution. Phi Delta Kappan, Research Bulletin. (May, No. 11).
- Roth, E. R. (1997a). Improvement of instructional services to students with learning problems. Bureau of Special Education, Department of Education, State of Iowa, Des Moines.

- Roth, E. R. (1997b). Report submitted to the Board of Educational Examiners Task Force. Department of Education, State of Iowa, Des Moines.
- Rule, S., & Stowitschek, J. J. (1991). Use of telecommunications for inservice support of teachers of students with disabilities. Journal of Special Education Technology, 11(2), 57-63.
- Sashkin, M. (1995). The visionary leader. Amherst, MA: HRD Press.
- Schrage, M. (1990). Shared minds: The new technologies of collaboration. New York: Random House.
- Smelter, R. W., Rasch, B. W., & Yudewitz, G. J. (1994, September). Thinking of inclusion for all special needs students? Better think again. Phi Delta Kappan, 76, 35-38.
- Stainback, W., Stainback, S., Courtneage, L., & Jaben, T. (1985). Facilitating mainstreaming by modifying the mainstream. Exceptional Children, 42, 144-152.
- Storms, J., DeStefano, L., & O'Leary, E. (1996). Individual with disabilities education act: Transition requirements: A guide for states, districts, schools, and families. Des Moines, IA: Regional Resource Center.
- Thousand, J. S., & Villa, R. (1995, December). Inclusion: Alive and well in the Green Mountain State. Phi Delta Kappan, 77, 288-291.
- Will, M. (1986). Educating students with learning problems: A shared responsibility. Exceptional Children, 52, 411-415.
- Woodward, J., & Carnine, D. (1993). Uses of technology for mathematics assessment and instruction: Reflection on a decade of innovations. Journal of Special Education Technology, 12(1), 38-48.
- York, J. L., & Reynolds, M. C. (1996). Special education and inclusion. In J. Sikula (Ed.), Handbook of research on teacher education (pp. 820-836). New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.

## APPENDIX A

Letter to Principals  
On Drake University Letterhead

Dear Principal Ratigan:

I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Drake University. I am preparing to conduct a descriptive, ethnographic study and am seeking a school from AEA 11 which has successfully included a student, or student with disabilities into its curriculum. My hope is that this study will provide a clear understanding of how inclusion manifests itself for the high school student with learning problems to that it is a meaningful experience for students with and without special learning challenges. Teachers desiring to improve education for all students are faced with increasing complexity in their classrooms. They are finding the expectations for teaching have changed, and are seeking practical guidance towards positive results. We can all learn from shared success stories. I am looking for a school willing to share its story.

My research will focus on the problem solving and creative approaches that are used for planning, implementing, and assessing the inclusion of students in our high school setting. This process could help your staff clearly identify their strengths and successes as well as provide a means of expanding their problem solving capabilities. I welcome suggestions as to how this study could be useful for your situation.

If you feel good about what is happening in your school, or you know of a school that is, please contact me at your earliest convenience and we can discuss the possibilities further. I thank you in advance for your help with this important research. I am enclosing a definition of inclusion which may help guide your consideration for participation.

Sincerely,

Esther Roth  
(W) 515-271-2179  
(F) 515-271-4973  
(H) 515-255-9382

### Definition of Inclusion

"Inclusion refers to the opportunity for all students to participate in the totality of the school experience. In an inclusive school system, special education and related support services are provided in typical school settings. This includes instruction in regular education classes and participation in extracurricular activities (Association for Retarded Citizens (Arc), 1992, pp. 2-3). It reflects an approach to education that identifies the general education classroom as the first alternative for all children. It is a very individualized approach to meeting the education needs of students with learning problems that effects the larger student community. Dianne Ferguson, 1995, describes inclusion as a process that is part of total education not exclusively special education. She shares her own definition of inclusion:

Inclusion is a process of meshing general and special education reform initiatives and strategies in order to achieve a unified system of public education that incorporates all children and youth as active, fully participating members of the school community; that views diversity as the norm; and that ensures a high-quality education for each student by providing meaningful curriculum, effective teaching and necessary supports for each student (p. 286).

Some common, but not exclusive characteristics include:

- Active participation in general education classrooms and activities for both educational and social opportunities (Students with disabilities are dispersed throughout the system following same schedule as peers).
- Individualized educational program (IEP)
- Support services brought to the student (Services for students with special needs no longer identified by specially labeled rooms or places).
- Attendance centers parallels their neighborhood peers (Shared physical space with equal accessibility)
- Special education teacher works as team member serving students with and without disabilities together
- Using innovative and proven teaching strategies, programs, methods, and materials for a variety of learning styles

## List of AEA 11 High School Principals Receiving the Letter

First Name	Last Name	School
Gary	Ratigan	Ankeny High
Greg	Detimmeman	A-D-M High
Richard	Adkins	Dallas Center-Grimes
Jerry	Stilwell	East High (DM)
William	McCollaugh	Hoover (DM)
Thomas	Drake	Lincoln (DM)
Joan	Roberts	North (DM)
Larry	Martindale	Roosevelt (DM)
Paul	Devin	Central (DM)
Charlene	Hendrix	Kurtz Alternative/Scavo
Ann	Shaw	Indianola
Michael	Baethke	Indianola Learning
James	Casey	Johnston

<u>Terry</u>	<u>Hutchings</u>	<u>Adair-Casey</u>
<u>Charles</u>	<u>Achler</u>	<u>Ames</u>
<u>Robert</u>	<u>Lowe</u>	<u>Audubon</u>
<u>Larry</u>	<u>Shaeffer</u>	<u>Ballard</u>
<u>John</u>	<u>Sauer</u>	<u>Baxter</u>
<u>Richard</u>	<u>Moore</u>	<u>Bondurant-Farrar</u>
<u>David</u>	<u>Kapfer</u>	<u>Boone</u>
<u>Leroy</u>	<u>Powell</u>	<u>Carlisle</u>
<u>David</u>	<u>Stickrod</u>	<u>Carroll</u>
<u>David</u>	<u>Morgan</u>	<u>Colfax-Mingo</u>
<u>Steven</u>	<u>Buhrow</u>	<u>Colo-Nesco</u>
<u>Darrell</u>	<u>Bartling</u>	<u>CoonRapids-Bayard</u>
<u>James</u>	<u>McCracken</u>	<u>Earlham</u>
<u>John</u>	<u>Brooks</u>	<u>Exira</u>
<u>James</u>	<u>Quamstrom</u>	<u>Gilbert</u>
<u>Garold</u>	<u>Thomas</u>	<u>Guthrie Center</u>



<u>Patrick</u>	<u>O'Donnell</u>	<u>Interstate 35</u>
<u>James</u>	<u>Dyer</u>	<u>Knoxville</u>
<u>Gregory</u>	<u>Thomas</u>	<u>Lynnville-Sully</u>
<u>Dennis</u>	<u>Pelisek</u>	<u>Madrid</u>
<u>Don</u>	<u>Riggenberg</u>	<u>Manning</u>
<u>Karlos</u>	<u>McClure</u>	<u>Martensdale-St. Mary's</u>
<u>David</u>	<u>Schmitt</u>	<u>Melcher-Dallas</u>
<u>Ralph</u>	<u>Murray</u>	<u>Nevada</u>
<u>Gary</u>	<u>Kirchhoff</u>	<u>Newton</u>
<u>Gary</u>	<u>Fjelland</u>	<u>North Polk</u>
<u>Tom</u>	<u>Fish</u>	<u>Norwalk</u>
<u>Stanley</u>	<u>Friesen</u>	<u>Ogden</u>
<u>Louis</u>	<u>McCrea</u>	<u>Panorama</u>
<u>Ron</u>	<u>Young</u>	<u>PCM</u>
<u>Mark</u>	<u>Lee</u>	<u>Pella</u>
<u>Eugene</u>	<u>Brady</u>	<u>Perry</u>

<u>David</u>	<u>Isgrig</u>	<u>Pleasantville</u>
<u>Roger</u>	<u>Pohlman</u>	<u>Roland-Story</u>
<u>Carol</u>	<u>Peterson</u>	<u>Saydel</u>
<u>William</u>	<u>Orcutt</u>	<u>Southeast Polk</u>
<u>John</u>	<u>Monroe</u>	<u>Southeast Warren</u>
<u>Mike</u>	<u>Ruffin</u>	<u>Stuart-Menlo</u>
<u>Tracy</u>	<u>Hook</u>	<u>Twin Cedars</u>
<u>Robert</u>	<u>Stouffer</u>	<u>Urbandale</u>
<u>Jack</u>	<u>Rockell</u>	<u>Van Meter</u>
<u>Bernard</u>	<u>VanRoekel</u>	<u>Waukee</u>
<u>Robert</u>	<u>Brooks</u>	<u>Valley (WDM)</u>
<u>Kevin</u>	<u>Crawford</u>	<u>Winterset</u>
<u>Walter</u>	<u>Stover Jr.</u>	<u>Woodward-Granger</u>

## APPENDIX B

## Participant Agreement

Typed on Drake University Letterhead

March 2, 1998

Drake University  
School of Education  
Des Moines, IA 50311

Dear Participant:

I am conducting a study on the inclusion of students with cognitive disabilities in a high school setting. I have selected your high school because of its reputation as a school which welcomes students, including students with special learning needs. Your school principal designated you as a key partner in this activity.

Your participation is voluntary and if you do consent to participate, you may withdraw at any time. I have outlined procedures below which describe the study and what it will require of you, if you decide to participate.

This is a qualitative research approach designed to gain a rich, thick description of those characteristics or elements which enhance the successful inclusion of students in your school. It is not designed to interfere, alter, or compare your present program. Pseudonyms will be used throughout to maintain confidentiality.

I will begin this study with an audio-recorded initial interview. This interview will be general in nature and designed to gain your perspective on the inclusion of students with special educational needs into the general curriculum. It will last no more than 50 minutes.

Following the initial interview, I will conduct semi-formal observations in order to see the variety of activities relevant to inclusion. These observations will not intrude into the teaching and learning environment.

A second interview may follow with questions designed to clarify the picture. Again, no interview will last more than 50 minutes. Your principal has granted me permission to conduct as much of this research as feasible within your regular school day.

As I compile data and build theory, I will provide your principal with a copy of my work for review and assessment of accuracy. At the conclusion of the study I will mail a copy of this dissertation to your high school principal.

You have right to a copy of this consent form and to obtain a copy or to ask questions regarding the study. You may contact me at:

Esther Roth  
School of Education  
Drake University  
3206 University  
Des Moines, IA 50312  
Esther.Roth@drake.edu  
515-271-4846 (w)  
515-255-9382 (h)

Fax: 515-271-4848

I have read the above and agree to allow Esther Roth, a Drake University graduate student, to use the data gathered in her study on the inclusion of students with cognitive learning disabilities in a high school setting.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Position

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX C  
Observation Data Sheets

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

TIME \_\_\_\_\_ to

\_\_\_\_\_

PLACE \_\_\_\_\_

PURPOSE \_\_\_\_\_

## PARTICIPANTS PRESENT:

Name	Position
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

DIAGRAM OF SETTING

DESCRIPTION (setting, people, and activities)	PARTICIPANT STATEMENTS AND QUOTES	OBSERVER'S COMMENTS